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Agents of Change: Stewardship and the Ethic of Care in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Representations of Social Change

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Dedication

To my best friends, my sisters

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Agents of Change: Stewardship and the Ethic of Care in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Representations of Social Change

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The steward was a ubiquitous figure in England for the centuries during which the landed estate dominated both the geographical and political landscape and figured prominently in Victorian religious and economic discourses. However, the figure of the steward and the role and the ethic of stewardship have not been subjected to sustained critical scrutiny in literature studies. This study therefore adopts a social historical approach to explore the function of stewards and stewardship in representations of social change in nineteenth-century English fiction, including George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72; 1874), Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* (1855), Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and Charlotte Brönte's *Villette* (1853). Stewards managed the property of England's major landholders and ensured the financial prosperity of their estates by carefully managing social relations. Their duties required them to connect, communicate, and reconcile the varied interests of different classes and groups and especially to synthesize profit and sympathy, economy and feeling. These duties made stewards ideally situated to observe, accommodate, resist, and participate in processes like enclosure, parliamentary reform, and industrialization that altered landscapes and

changed people's relationships to property. Based on this historical reality, this project proposes that stewardship represented to Victorians a non-possessive approach to property management that made stewards important figures through which to represent and imagine processes of transition that emphasized growth, development, and change based on de-centralized, inclusive principles, principles often conceptualized as acts of caring and the establishment of community. It therefore applies the framework of the ethic of care to explore how stewards represent the ways that Victorians dealt with concerns about changing definitions of and relationships to property that defined agency and power in the nineteenth century. Observing characters who act as stewards under the ethic of care rubric reveals maps of power in these novels that indicate that values like care and community could be instrumentalized to secure the authority and predominance of the socially powerful. The project also explores how novels and novelists mirrored both the functions and the moral ambivalence of the steward as they participated in aesthetic projects and acts of representation associated with affective community creation.

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Introduction

The labor of stewards is seldom directly represented in English fiction; their major roles in English literature may seem limited to marginal dramatic texts like the melodrama, in which they primarily figure as mustache-twirling villains, or to unreliable narrators like Gabriel Betteredge, the first narrator in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868). Yet the steward was a nearly universal figure in England for the centuries during which the landed estate dominated both the geographical and political landscape. As "an active manager whose business it was to improve his employer's property to the utmost" (Hainsworth 8), stewards exerted no little influence. "The management of a landed estate," Sarah Webster points out, was "in effect the supervision of some of the largest enterprises in the British economy." This meant that "a key space of social and political activity, was increasingly in the hands of agents" (30).[1] Describing an era in which social changes were inextricably linked with changing relationships to land and property, this historical perspective suggests the need to conduct a closer examination of the literary representations of the men—and women—whose stewardship activities placed them at the center of nineteenth-century social change.

As Webster suggests, estate stewards had a unique social position and function. A steward was, as Roger Hainsworth says, "a 'mediator' in the anthropological sense of the word" (3). At the local level, such mediation included resolving disputes between tenants, overseeing their farming practices, instructing them in the newest agricultural techniques, collecting and conveying into his hands the master's rent, and maintaining roads and other means of communication. Importantly, however, twentieth-century scholars and

[1] The relationship between the terms "agent" and "steward" will be explained in Chapter One.

[2] Hainsworth goes so far as to claim that "Without the stewards' constant mediating between otherwise irreconcilable extremes, the mechanisms of society might have broken down between the Restoration of

even nineteenth-century observers have argued that these local activities had national ramifications. As a mediating figure, Roger Hainsworth declares, the steward negotiated between and reconciled "governors and governed, capital and province, great society and popular culture" (3).[2] Indeed, contemporary commentators, such as the professional agent Charles Ley, often indicated that the steward was the node through which agricultural improvements were communicated to rural areas, implying that the productivity of the lands of England, and therefore England's population, safety, and economic viability, were almost entirely in the hands of the nation's stewards.

In carrying out these locally and nationally significant duties, however, stewards did not act of themselves. Their primary concern was to ensure "the prosperity of the estate and thereby of [the] master, his family, and posterity" (48). Stewards gained much of their social and political importance as their lords' representatives; in the master's absence, the steward literally and legally acted as the master. One lord wrote to his steward that he was "to perform as fully in every respect […] as I myself might or could do I being personally present" (Hainsworth 43). This included signing documents in the master's name and even "taking his place in several spheres of local government" (Spring 119). Stewards' roles, therefore, had an ethical dimension that made them more than a subordinate in a straightforward master-servant relationship.[3] Theirs was a position of

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[2] Hainsworth goes so far as to claim that "Without the stewards' constant mediating between otherwise irreconcilable extremes, the mechanisms of society might have broken down between the Restoration of Charles II and the death of Queen Anne, years marked by frequent agricultural depression and political turmoil at home" (5).

[3] With respect to the function of the steward as the maintainer and builder of community (in opposition to capitalist values of individualism), which will be discussed below, it is interesting to note Raymond Williams's discussion of the servant ethos and its limitations: "From Coleridge to Tawney the idea of […] service to the community, has been most valuably stressed, in opposition to the individualist claim. The stress has been confirmed by the generations of training which substantiate the ethical practice of our professions, and of our public civil service. […] The idea of service, ultimately is no substitute for the idea of active mutual responsibility, which is the other version of community. Few men can give the best of themselves as servants; it is the reduction of man to a function" (328-330).

trust, and they were accountable to another for the use they made of their own initiative and autonomy.

As I considered these historical realities of the steward's duties, it seemed that the figure of the steward embodied a set of values not often associated with nineteenth-century culture's moves toward capitalism, individualism, and institutional approaches to social problems. My conceptualization of the function the steward may have filled in the Victorian imagination was stimulated by Lisa Moore's *Sister Arts: The Erotics of Lesbian Landscapes* (2011), in which she describes women's use of artistic and literary representations of the natural world and their shaping of actual landscapes to create or express desire and intimacy between and among women in the eighteenth century (2). Women's uses of landscape, it seemed, were fundamentally different than the male use of landscape to express and exert power, primarily because of men's and women's "differential access" to property (7). The steward is in a similar position: he practices ownership without possession, and his unique stance toward property informed a vision of property management as a collective, inclusive effort. Indeed, unlike his often absent master, the steward experienced property as a network of social relations that required care to maintain. As Hainsworth asserts, "The surest way to [make the estate profitable] was by promoting harmony between the landlord and tenant" (48), negotiating the day-to-day, local relationships that arose from life on the land. This required more than just excellent bookkeeping or surveying skills or expertise in the latest methods of crop rotation. "No professional training could guarantee the essential qualities of tact, acceptance, and integrity; if these were lacking an estate might suffer grievous loss," writes historian Edward Hughes (195). The steward's most effective means for increasing the value of the estate, in other words, was essentially social, and the most highly valued

stewards had not only excellent people skills but a strong sense of duty, community feeling, and interest in their fellow men.

The steward was therefore ideally situated to represent and protect the relational, affective value of land and the landscape it produced. It is not surprising, therefore, that the steward's position often shaded into the moral: "A tenanted estate differs widely from other species of property, as giving power and authority over persons as well as things. It has therefore a dignity and set of duties attached to it which are peculiar to itself," an 1851 manual by G. A. Dean declared (238). Of the obligations present between tenant and landlord or his representative, Dean continues, "The grand thing is for all parties to cherish an increasing conviction of this moral force of the relationship" (237). Sharing Dean's conviction of the moral ramifications of steward-tenant relations, another nineteenth-century author opined that the estate itself, like a man, can develop a good or bad character, and a good tenant will be attracted to and be happiest on a estate with good character, where liberality, kindness, justice, and trust are exercised (Marshall 373-374). Therefore, through the steward's ideally careful attention to developing an estate with good character, stewardship becomes what can only be called a project of care—an effort to create and maintain conditions that make relationship and care itself possible.

For many Victorians, care and relationship were precisely the values threatened by industrialization, the proletarianization of English workers, and growing class divides. The social changes that occurred during the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century—including land enclosure, the electoral reforms accomplished through the redistricting mandated by the Reform Acts, and industrialization—are often characterized[4] in terms of class antagonism, as a series of battles pitting the soon-to-be

[4] See, for example, E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).

proletariat against the capitalists who would become the comfortable middle and upper classes. The alternative approach to change that the steward was ideally situated to represent can be summarized in the Victorian desire to return to or recreate "community." Though, as Miranda Joseph has pointed out, this term in contemporary culture "is used so pervasively it would appear to be nearly meaningless" (57), it is typically deployed for its "positive connotations—a sense of belonging, understanding, caring, cooperation, equality" (57). For Victorians, "community" was the ameliorative opposite of capitalist modernity and its values. Many adopted the framework proposed by Ferdinand Tönnies, who distinguished between two social patterns he called Gemeinschaft, in which social relationships were modeled on family ties and rooted in tradition, and Gesellschaft, an urban, heterogeneous, impersonal, individualistic social grouping (Graver 14). Victorians like George Eliot saw their age as a transition from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft and worried about the loss of concrete communities and the "mutual ties and common interests" (14) that had made social life, work, and identity meaningful and secure. The Gemeinshcaft community was almost always agricultural and rural (Williams 259), the setting associated with stewards. As Victorians sought ways to "correct the negative tendencies of Gesellschaft […] by promoting the idea of an organic Gesellschaft that could accommodate the most positive values of Gemeinschaft" (Graver 16), the steward, with his mediating position between two worlds and his role in promoting social harmony, would have been a potent tool for imagining how to maintain or create new communities in a time of intense social transition.

Therefore, my primary aim in this dissertation is to explore the ways nineteenth-century English readers and writers thought through the figure of the steward to articulate a social narrative of change based on principles of care. The steward not only managed land, but historically did so by managing feelings. Therefore, while he had great

influence on the distribution of capital—advising his master where to invest and facilitating the development of communications technologies like canals and railways—he also was key in redistributing the emotional capital necessary to make community life sustainable in this changing economy. As J. V. Beckett notes in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* (1989), such changes required the "active cooperation" of those whose power was derived from land (564), and the steward's ability to connect, communicate, and reconcile the varied interests of different classes and groups—and especially his ability to synthesize profit and sympathy, economy and feeling—made him an important figure through which to understand and imagine changing social conditions in England. In this project, I examine the ways in which the discourse of stewardship is adopted at critical moments of historical transition in Victorian literature to move community and care values from a concrete to an abstract realm where they could exist and be preserved as experiences of shared feeling mediated by literature itself.

It is important to note that because the steward was associated in the English imagination with a way of life that was thought to be disappearing, he was often assigned a nostalgic value that seems to counter his imaginative uses as a figure facilitating change. Moreover, as stewardship itself became a profession and stewards began to work from London offices rather than on the estate, the figure of the old family retainer took on additional positive nostalgic value through his intimate attachment to the land and life-long loyalty to its owner and tenants. In this dissertation, the steward is indeed sometimes associated with conservative and even retrogressive projects, such as the nineteenth-century revival of paternalism. As Suzanne Graver observes, "The nineteenth-century preoccupation with community is retrospective in that it often includes a nostalgic response to the dissolution of the old" (52). This nostalgia could sometimes operate oppressively. Miranda Joseph emphasizes, for example, that "community" values are not

always positive. "In its contemporary deployments 'community' is used to invoke 'emotional relationships' that can then be instrumentalized'," she warns, summarizing the claims of Nikolas Rose. However, this does not mean that stewardship is incompatible with emotionally honest progress. Graver continues, "The passionate concern with advancing new forms of social life conducive to community in Gesellschaft makes [the preoccupation with community] simultaneously progressive and innovative" (52). The pursuit of care, in other words, can be distinctly forward-looking. This is, in fact, the argument associated with conversations about care in the fields of psychology and feminism.

To better theorize the concept of care and the ethic associated with stewardship practices, I turned to Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982). Gilligan's study began a feminist revolution in the field of psychology by describing and validating women's approach to conflict and decrying the field's view of moral development, which had historically been premised on a male-centered telos. The "ethic of care," which Gilligan identifies with women, suggests, like stewardship, an alternative narrative of growth in which change does not occur through competition and individuation (masculine values) but through a desire to "maintain relational order and connection" (Gilligan xiv). For Gilligan, the concept of care stands in contrast to the concept of rights. While women's (and stewards') "moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities […] and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative" (19), men are concerned with "how to exercise one's rights without interfering with the rights of others"[5] (21), a "formal and abstract"

[5] Gilligan mentions several times that the conservative neighbor in Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall" exemplifies this mindset with his repetition of the phrase, "Good fences make good neighbors."

endeavor (19). The example of two children's responses to the same moral dilemma illustrates the difference between these two outlooks:

> To Jake, responsibility means *not doing* what he wants because he is thinking of others; to Amy, it means *doing* what others are counting on her to do regardless of what she herself wants. Both children are concerned with avoiding hurt but construe the problem in different ways—he seeing hurt to arise from the expression of aggression, she from failure of response. (38)

Therefore, the goals and outcomes of the rights and care paradigms are distinct: the first attempts to discover the "objectively fair and just resolution" to moral dilemmas, while the second "focuses instead on the limitations of any particular resolution" to allow the agent to completely fulfill her responsibilities "and describes the conflicts that remain" (21).

Many of the characteristics and consequences of the ethic of care described by Gilligan are useful for thinking through the concept of stewardship and for identifying and analyzing literary stewards. Gilligan notes that the convergence of the rhetorics of responsibility and rights "marks times of crisis and change" (2). Ultimately, then, those invested in an ethic of care must integrate the need for personal integrity and equality at the heart of the concept of rights into their desire to behave responsibly towards others (166) to achieve full moral development. This need for integration suggests that the stewardship narrative is one in which relationship networks and family, marital, and even national responsibilities come to acknowledge and be reconciled with individual autonomy. Resolving "the tension between selfishness and responsibility" through the realization that "self and other are interdependent" (74) creates the true steward or is the culmination of true stewardship. Change and transition occur when the understanding of what constitutes care changes (171).

Finally, but relatedly, the ethic of care requires an "insistence on the particular" (101), an interest in the case rather than in establishing an abstract system of principles that apply equally well in any situation. The development of an ethic of care is usually motivated by the realization of the inadequacy of abstract systems to acknowledge and include multiple perspectives, the experiences of marginalized groups, relationships based on compassionate interdependence, and goals directed toward care rather than achievement (Gilligan 168). One of the aims of stewardship, then, is to validate and empower relative representations; intimate, affective bonds; and the significance of the local. Indeed, it is through this "insistence on the particular" that the novel form itself can be said to participate in the project of stewardship. The Victorian novel represents the choice to focus on a few special subjectivities and to trace their satellites and networks. As Alex Woloch writes in *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (2003), it must economize between psychological depth and social breadth. "In the paradigmatic character-structure of the realist novel, any character can be a protagonist, but only one character is" (Woloch 31), he states, describing the problem confronting those involved in an ethic of care—the problem of responsibly delimiting responsibility to maintain care for others while asking for equality for one's self, which the ability of being able to imagine multiple possibilities for action through narrative strategies is key to facilitating. Through the nature of the craft itself, Victorian authors—and their novels—become engaged in responsible representation—the work of stewardship.

Using Gilligan's ethic of care to begin building a description of stewardship both introduces the problem of gender into the literary analysis of the steward and allows the definition of steward to be applied more broadly. Gilligan herself is careful to point out that the association of the ethic of care with women "is not absolute" (2). Rather, "the

contrasts between male and female voices are presented […] to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex" (2). This open-endedness both allows women to be examined under the rubric of stewards and accommodates men in the ethic of care paradigm. For men, in fact, the concept of the ethic of care allows even those men who did not hold the historical position of steward or land agent to be considered as stewards. In this dissertation, for instance, the idea of the landlord himself acting as the steward will be an important one that is not necessarily foreclosed upon by historical evidence. Elizabeth Bennet essentially places Mr. Darcy in the position of steward when she muses on the number of people under his "guardianship" (Austen 277). Her sentiment is in line with eighteenth-century admonitions to men of wealth to "be their own stewards," a position, indeed, assumed by many squires of smaller estates who found it more efficient to run their affairs themselves or with the help only of a "practical bailiff or husbandman" (Hughes 188). In the nineteenth century, this sentiment experienced a renaissance in an ideological context. Jessica Gerard explains, "Paternalist doctrine revived the traditional obligations of noblesse oblige. Thus, in the 1840s, the fifth Earl of Macclesfield and his wife Louisa 'considered that their wealth, place and power had been given them as a stewardship'" (123). The language of the ethic of care is also present in historical descriptions of the social relationships extant in landed societies, reinforcing the nineteenth-century idea that landownership constituted a stewardship. While land gave its owners status, "the community conferred upon the landowner responsibilities which ranged from acting in the locality as justice of the peace, to representing the wider population in Parliament. In return, the landowner needed to display a sense of responsibility towards the community" ("Landownership and Estate Management" 545). Darcy's meeting with his steward in the pivotal chapter in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) in

which Elizabeth Bennet visits Pemberley is a sign of the master's own proper stewardship, his attention to local matters rather than the pursuit of personal pleasure.

In addition to being imbedded in a complex of responsibility reminiscent of care ethics, landowners also played key roles in advancing social change, a mediating role that defines a steward. As industrialization progressed, for example, the strongly conservative tendency of those invested in landed property was becoming untenable, "and it was their capacity to accept and indeed to promote change, which was one of the characteristics of the period [1750-1850]" ("Landownership and Estate Management" 545).[6] Indeed, it was the network of relationships itself that ensured the advance of agricultural reforms and other changes in rural areas: "The real practical work of experimentation and innovation was the province of lesser country gentlemen, enlightened tenants, and forward-looking agents" (570), the triumvirate of success touted in many a steward manual. Through the web that their responsibilities enmeshed them in, landowners were able to participate in the spirit of stewardship modeled by their faithful agents.

Importantly, landownership also offered aristocratic women the opportunity to participate in stewardship. "The male spheres of estate management and politics were not entirely closed to landed women," comments Jessica Gerard. "A few women owned or ran estates, many women took an intelligent interest in national politics, and an increasing number of them played a supportive role in their menfolk's political campaigns" (118). As Gilligan's association of care ethics with women suggests, women's managerial involvement in the estate could be kept in line with nineteenth-

[6] J. V. Beckett argues, for example, that "with a few exceptions, the days when a man of fortune converted his wealth into landed acreage were already numbered by the end of the seventeenth century, and the practice had more or less disappeared by the mid eighteenth century" as the wealthy began to realize that the profits available through industrial enterprises were superior to agricultural profits (*AiE* 69). However, others have argued that "In 1815, the landed classes' values were derived from the pre-industrial agrarian society…in which the main source of wealth…was the landed estate" (Gerard 273).

century gender expectations. Landed women, for instance, were precluded from full involvement in political duties (Gerard 121). But such limitations meant that female landownership more completely conformed to the stewardship paradigm than male landownership because it was almost always "ownership without possession" due to the nineteenth-century legal constraints on women's property. Illustrating the circumstances under which women sometimes took on stewardship roles, Alastair Owens writes that

> the conditions attached to most trusts meant that widows were rarely able to derive much financial benefit from family property. Within prevailing systems of inheritance, widows largely looked after property for others and could only use it prudently for the maintenance of themselves and minority children. They were, therefore, often simultaneously the linch-pin of intergenerational provision systems while being its least rewarded beneficiary. (310)

This passage emphasizes that women were often simply "intermediaries" or "custodians" of the property with which they were entrusted. Women who assumed such responsibilities therefore often resembled the steward who ran the estate in lieu of his absentee master—representing him for all intents and purposes and carrying out his will, but only in his absence until he returned to resume his rightful place. In the words of Gerard, a woman "did not have the title, but she often had the role" (116). Many women, in fact, were made stewards by virtue of their husband's frequent absences from the estate and became capable agents. Among these women were Lady Stanhope, who "reported to her politician husband in 1878 that the farm stock book was up-to-date, the list of leases was ready, the new brick machine was working well, and the dairy wall had been cemented" (120), indicating that she was intimately involved in duties that were considered stewardly staples in the most popular advice manuals. Maude Hemmings managed to gain the affectionate title of "Squire of Bentley" for her diligence in looking after her father's estates in Scotland. One landowning husband even bought his wife a property of her own. Like the model steward, this woman was described as an excellent

manager who "would walk for hours about her woods, marking timber, planning bridges or summer houses, and continuing walks" (121).

Tellingly, however, Gerard summarizes women's primary contribution to the estate and her community as an investment of "her time and skills in human relations" (123). More than landed men, such women managed social change by fostering individual bonds and networks of relationships, whether as political hostesses or Poor Law guardians (122). The historical evidence, therefore, seems to confirm Gilligan's assignment of care ethics primarily to women and suggests that in many ways women's orientation to moral problems was culturally imposed. Though women may have experienced this ethic of care as a gender imperative, men were under no such obligation. In fact, through stewardship, men seem to be able to embrace care ethics as a function of their professional or class status, to gain access to an affective masculinity. As men, they are in the ideal position—and may have more scope than women—to truly synthesize Gilligan's languages of rights and responsibility. This possibility will be explored in this dissertation through figures such as Caleb Garth, whose efforts at stewardship seem to exemplify a socially approved affective masculinity.

In addition to allowing women to act "beyond" their gender[7] and men to broaden masculine gender norms in acceptable ways, the gendered nature of stewardship has significant political implications for those identified as stewards. Men and women experienced stewardship differently primarily because the nineteenth century underwent most of its major social restructuring through changing dispositions toward property, whether by enclosing fields and redistricting parliamentary boroughs or through growing skepticism of a landed aristocracy. Inevitably, because of men's and women's

[7] Maude Hemmings's nickname (the "Squire of Bentley") is one example of the ways in which women's roles were not reimagined to become more inclusive. Instead, their participation in activities beyond the realm of approved femininity placed them in a masculine role.

"differential access" (Moore 7) to property, women were affected by changes in land and property use differently than men. Stewardship, which involves managing property by managing relationships, is a key player in mediating the land-based changes that occurred throughout the century and necessarily had different effects on men's than on women's political and social power.

This power imbalance is evident in one of the primary languages by which stewardship mediated and managed social relationships: the language of landscape. Before discussing the power dynamics inherent in landscape, however, it will be useful to demonstrate the central role landscape plays in the steward narrative. Once again, Elizabeth Bennet's reconsideration of Mr. Darcy's character offers the example needed. The pivotal Chapter 43 opens with a lengthy description of Pemberley's prospects and their effect on Elizabeth's feelings:

> Elizabeth, as they drove along, watched for the first appearance of Pemberley Woods with some perturbation […]. The park was very large, and contained great variety of ground. They entered it in one of its lowest points, and drove for some time through a beautiful wood stretching over a wide extent. Elizabeth's mind was too full for conversation, but she saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view. They gradually ascended for half-a-mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (Austen 271)

This passage does more than simply set an idyllic stage for the resumption of Elizabeth and Darcy's romance. "Landscape [was] a powerful idiom in eighteenth-century Anglo-

American culture" (Moore 5), and its creation, arrangement, and manipulation communicated changing "social dispositions towards order, power, and meaning," as Ann Bermingham claims (78). The practice of clearing land to create vast open prospects, for example, a fad in the eighteenth century, was seen by one landowner as parallel to the irresponsible destruction of government by revolutionaries seeking liberty (83). Moore adds that the landscape idiom was also heavily used to express possession or mastery of nature or territory, as in the importation of colonial plants into English pleasure gardens (5). Such an example demonstrates W. J. T. Mitchell's point that "Landscape is a medium in the fullest sense of the word. It is a material "means" (to borrow Aristotle's terminology) like language or paint, embedded in a tradition of cultural signification and communication, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values" (14). Therefore, though readers have been known to interpret Elizabeth's change of heart in this scene cynically, suggesting she is simply awed by a show of wealth, this reading of Elizabeth as a gold-digger ignores her own sensitivity to the cultural clues of Darcy's landscape, clues that would have been legible to most ladies in her position. As Mitchell affirms, "Landscape is a medium not only for expressing value but also for expressing meaning, for communication between persons" (15). In other words, what Elizabeth sees in the landscape has been deliberately fashioned to call up certain memories, sensations, and associations. Even what she chooses to pay attention to is culturally scripted and encoded. The passage's emphasis on the carefully crafted "naturalness" of Pemberley shows that Darcy's grounds are in keeping with the popular landscape philosophies of the day, philosophies that associated this naturalness with virtue.

The cultural embeddedness of landscape and it malleability made it an important tool in a steward's hands for mediating land-based social change. Both modern

geographers James S. and Nancy G. Duncan and historians J. M. Neeson and Susanna Martins conclude that landscape strongly represents a community's identity to itself, making it a tool that can also support the steward's ethic of care. As stewards engaged in their practical tasks of managing their masters' forests, draining marshland, ensuring the upkeep of farm buildings, consolidating estate lands, and facilitating enclosure, they were also developing and managing landscape and, therefore, ideology—working through landscape to reconcile the economic advancement of their employer with a community based on sympathy and mutual care. This became an especially important task during debates over enclosure and land reform, when the erection of fences, for example, seemed to create increasingly exclusive forms of possession. Indeed, the conflict over enclosure in the eighteenth century was in large measure one that rhetorically pitted "the moral economy" against the "self-interested individualism of agrarian capitalism" (Neeson 43). In other words, profit and sympathy were often seen as irreconcilable outcomes of one or the other side of the debate. Conservative opponents to enclosure, for instance, were concerned about the character of the individual or citizen that would result from the land reform and what sort of relation he would bear toward the other members of his local community.[8] Many expressed the view that the erection of fences by liberal enclosers was a heartless—and sometimes even godless—consolidation of power that would impoverish the many to enrich the few (Martins 36). Stewards, embodying a compromise between profit and sympathy, often found themselves implementing changes like enclosure while seeking to mollify tenants and other locals dependent on the estate lands. Part of the steward's labor during social transitions like these was to represent land

[8] Jeaneatte Neeson points out that "commoners were not only potential labourers; they were either property-owners and patriots, or criminals and paupers, too. Critics expressed a concern with morality and poverty as well as labor supply" (44).

as inclusive and available, and this was primarily done through the fetishization of landscape to obscure the economic relations that created it.

Through such negotiations, land and its sister, landscape, become central to the ways stewards can direct the narrative energies of a text. In some ways, this argument has been initiated by Elsie Michie's *The Vulgar Question of Money: Heiresses, Materialism, and the Novel of Manners from Jane Austen to Henry James* (2011). Her study focuses on the image of the rich woman who, together with her counterpart the poor woman, doubles the female position in triangulations such as Eve Sedgwick's.[9] The tensions that result as men struggle to choose between the values represented by these two types of women open a space in which to talk about the relationship between property and values such as sympathy and care, specifically as they are routed through romantic desire. To Michie, the (usually vulgar) rich woman embodies Victorian anxieties about changing sources of wealth, making her and her sister, the (usually genteel) poor woman, a kind of proto-steward dyad used in the nineteenth-century novel to navigate the shift between a landed and cash economy. Michie's insistence on marriage as the "place where critics can trace fiction's sustained engagement with the economic forces" (25) is a starting point for beginning to describe the ways that treatment of property directs the sympathetic energies of relationships in the mid-Victorian novels I analyze in this dissertation. Such direction can happen as literally as it does for Elizabeth Bennet, who is wooed by a landscape in perfect harmony with her sensibility—one silently maintained by a faithful steward—or as abstractly as it does in *Middlemarch*, when Dorothea Brooke takes on the role of steward to mend the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Lydgate through the affective use

[9] Sedgwick famously observed in *Between Men*: *English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) that literary narratives were often driven by a male-female-male triangulation, typically comprised of a man and a woman in a romantic relationship and an additional male, perhaps the rival of the coupled man. However, within this triangulation, the woman in a romantic pair mediates—to her own erasure—the power struggle between the two men.

of the cash revenue from her land—money that she denies is hers and is desperate to invest in some affective scheme. Ultimately, however, the steward's multivalent role offers a better point from which to trace fiction's engagement with economic forces than the necessary "local" perspective offered by literary marriages.

This project locates the figure of the steward in several mid- and late-nineteenth-century works of English fiction and analyzes the ways in which these works use the steward to represent an ethical approach to meeting the challenges of a changing society. The dissertation is divided into four chapters and an epilogue that explore how, through literature, the steward became an integral part of the social narrative that informed the way Victorians imagined and experienced themselves and their culture. Chapter One, "From Steward to Land Agent: Professionalization and Care Ethics," describes the ways in which traditional values and the land agent's increasingly professional values interwove and sometimes clashed in several popular steward manuals published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I use the framework established by Carol Gilligan to analyze the interaction between sympathetic relations and the distance and efficiency promoted by professionalization. The first section, "The Steward's Library," introduces and describes the primary texts, analyzes the subject position from which the authors of the steward manuals spoke, and identifies the texts' imagined audience to establish the manuals as creators, examplars, and sustainers of a discourse about "good" stewardship. This leads to a discussion in "Agents of Change" of the steward's construction and role as mediator. "An Ideal Steward" analyzes how the principle of care was adapted and preserved to construct a true steward capable of satisfying and creating harmony among a multitude of communities and their interests in an ethical way. The chapter argues that, in addition to revealing a discourse about the ethic of care, the steward manual itself

attempts to become an act of stewardship through which community relations could be mediated.

Chapter Two, "Recreating Community: The Journey to Stewardship in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*," applies the principles of stewardship identified in the first chapter to examine how George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (1871-2) deploys the figure of the steward in the search for a way to mediate the economic shift from fixed to portable property and reconcile the uneasy relationship between individualistic and inclusive ideologies in an ethical way that preserves the sympathies essential to community life. The first section, "The 'Petty Medium' of Middlemarch," describes the town of Middlemarch, its disposition toward change and the factors limiting the town's ability to support relationships of care while undergoing the transitions being imposed upon it by the Reform Act, the railroad, and medical reforms. I then analyze Eliot's treatment of each of the transitionary forces affecting Middlemarch by discussing how she uses three potential stewards—Tertius Lydgate, Dorothea Brooke, and Fred Vincy—to explore ways to reinstate relationships of mutual obligation and care at various levels, both local and national. In "The Young Surgeon," I discuss how Lydgate's failure to fully recognize the interdependence of self and other results in the failure of his care project as a medical reformer but also points to broader problems created by the failure to integrate national and local as well as new and old forms of property. In "A New Theresa" and "The Hopeful Young Gentleman," I argue that Dorothea Brooke and Fred Vincy represent two different but successful models of the reconciliation Lydgate failed to achieve. Fred's narrative of the abandonment of the selfish extremes of land ownership and mercantilism suggests how local life can be possible within a newly mobile economic system, while Dorothea's realization that she must limit her sense of responsibility towards others to achieve a true ethic of care emphasizes the creation of a

national vision that values the local. Finally, drawing on Eliot's own philosophy of the role of literature in creating community, "George Eliot and the Novel: *Middlemarch* as Steward" argues that her efforts to communicate care values to her readers position Eliot and her novel as stewards creating, through the shared experience of literary consumption, the ideal community.

In Chapter Three, "The Uses of Stewardship in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*," I analyze the ways in which stewardship was deployed as a rhetorical stance to justify multiple, sometimes conflicting viewpoints that could themselves be antithetical to the actual work of care. In "Mixed Reviews," I observe that *The Warden* (1855) is a product of Trollope's desire to mediate not the outcome of a national debate, but the postures of the controversy's participants and, therefore, the relationships among the debaters. In "Reforming the Church of England," I situate these arguments within the context of the reforms that were reducing the Church of England's cultural, political, and social cachet. This context informed the actions, reactions, judgments made, and arguments used in the debate about Hiram's hospital. In "Competing Stewardships," I explore how these arguments are based on underlying assumptions about the responsible disposition of resources and observe how even rights-based or self-interested demands could be made and legitimated through stewardship. For example, the Anglican Church claims that it is a steward responsible for preserving values that are made available to the community only through aesthetic experiences with Church property. The aestheticization of Church property allows the Church to claim that its expenditures are an act of stewardship benefitting the nation and individuals but allows the Church to defend its own privileges and obscure its responsibility to recognize others' rights. In addition, the *Jupiter*'s articles criticize the Church on the basis of stewardship principles, accusing the clergy of misappropriating charitable funds, but do so with the veiled intent of consolidating the

power of individuals like the journalist Tom Towers. In "Repurposing Stewardship," I conclude that though Trollope supports Church reform, his novel acknowledges the important role the unreformed Church played in English social and political life. Furthermore, his exposure of the use of stewardship to mask the absence of actual stewardship points to a longing for and absence of an entity that can replace the Church in that role. His own novel, with its determined moral ambiguity and allowance for the coexistence of multiple perspectives, models the stewardship Trollope hopes to inculcate in the newspapers, which are becoming increasingly responsible for shaping public opinion and creating, without recourse to property, the Englishness threatened by Church reform.

Chapter Four, "Stewarding Literary Property in *Aurora Leigh*," builds on the uses of stewardship described in Chapter Three in an analysis of the use of the georgic mode in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856). In "Breaking New Ground," I note that the georgic genre is uniquely concerned with the aesthetics of the labor of representation and therefore uniquely suited to the discussion on stewardship. I suggest that Anne D. Wallace's observation that georgic and literary labor in general seems to disappear from the last two books of the poem is actually a symptom of stewardship at work and should be approached as an opportunity to explore how and why Aurora ultimately distances herself from the physical and economic realities in which writing poetry involves her. In "Her Father's England," I describe Aurora's reaction to her father's native landscape and England's concomitant lack of a spiritual, communal life. I detail Romney Leigh's attempts to reform his society's social inequities by adopting the stance of stewardship toward his own property to represent it as universally available. Romney's stewardship, however, is discovered to be a representational strategy that continues to perpetuate the system of privilege represented by the estate system and

emptied of human feeling by the arrival of capitalist social relations in the countryside. "Aurora Leigh's Georgic Labor" suggests that, fixed property being unviable as a basis of affective community relations because of its economic involvements, Aurora turns to poetry to revitalize and rehumanize England and restore community. This, however, involves her in a problem of representation: her poetry must be transformed into a commodity if it is to be accessible for the edification of the public but loses its spiritualizing aesthetic value if subjected to economic valuation. Her solution is to represent the processes that produce and circulate her poem as a commodity as redeemable, and to this end, she carefully separates the labor involved in writing prose from that needed to write poetry, emphasizing the exchange value of prose while aestheticizing her poetic labor as an act of spiritual cultivation by describing it in a georgic mode. When her poetry becomes financially remunerative and therefore overtly associated with the market, she appoints a steward to continue the work of representing poetry as the ameliorative alternative to the market. In "The Literary Agent," I propose that her fellow artist and friend, Vincent Carrington, assumes this work of stewardship and, through his representation of her in the literary market, allows her to continue representing the book of poetry she produces as an affective rather than an economic object. The success of this labor of representation marks the ultimate movement of true stewardship into the literary realm, establishing literary property as the new basis of affective community, as I conclude in "The New Stewardship."

The Epilogue, "I will be your faithful steward": Lucy Snowe's Care Ethics," revisits the care ethics debate, especially feminist concerns about the possibility of autonomy in the care ethics paradigm. By analyzing the stewardships of both M. Paul and Lucy Snowe from Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), the epilogue explores the ways that stewardship carries the potential either for complete self-abnegation or for preservation of

the self when embedded in relationship. It concludes that, regardless of the other uses to which stewardship is put, it remains a viable tool for imagining and acting on a commitment to care. Future directions for the project are discussed.

Chapter One

From Steward to Land Agent: Professionalization and Care Ethics

Background

Over the centuries, English land stewards comprised a diverse professional group that undertook a wide variety of duties. By the eighteenth century, Edward Hughes suggests, those engaged in the management of large estates might undertake numerous responsibilities, including drafting leases and tenancy agreements and ensuring their terms were observed, itself a time-consuming effort of surveillance; collecting rent; organizing or re-organizing farms; presiding at the manorial court (where these were still conducted); riding the boundaries with the tenants each year;[10] buying and selling stock; managing the manorial forests; keeping the estate accounts; paying estate staff, taxes, and tithes; preventing poachers from tampering with the game; supplying his master, especially when absent from the estate, with money and information; and even arranging weddings and making the accompanying financial arrangements for his master's daughters (195-197). So all-encompassing were his duties and so ubiquitously influential was the institution for which he labored that Hughes closes his essay on "The Eighteenth-Century Estate Agent" by remarking that more landed families ought to be persuaded to publish their estate papers, among whose treasures would be the letters, ledgers, and other records kept by the stewards. "Such records, I am convinced, hold the key to an understanding of the major social revolution which has made modern England," he concludes (198). Hughes's suggestion that an archive of the steward—a daily record of what he noticed, did, omitted, read, bought, or sold—could reveal the subtle transitions in

[10] This was an ancient practice in which "the whole parish met together and walked the bounds naming the field markers, [to] remember the line between what was theirs and what belonged to the parishes around them" (Neeson 2).

thought, attitude, and practice that led to transformative processes like the Industrial Revolution positions the steward as the local, even intimate mediator of social forces that had public, national ramifications. This chapter demonstrates how stewards and stewarding texts produced and publicly represented ideologies that shaped reactions to the most pressing social and political problems of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including foreign trade, population growth, and agricultural production.

Many of the records Hughes hoped to unearth are still difficult to access and remain largely unexplored, contained in what Helena Michie once called "an accidental steward archive."[11] Explaining what she meant by this phrase, Michie recalled that she was able to access several estate archives to write her book *Victorian Honeymoons: Journeys to the Conjugal* (2002). Because the subject of her research required her to "read against the grain" of the archive, she became aware of the correspondence that had been preserved between Victorian landowners and their stewards—correspondence that had likely been preserved for the value of the family members' letters alone.[12] Only infrequently has the steward's contribution to the estate archive been sought in its own right or to better understand the steward himself.[13] More readily available, however, are the tracts, manuals, treatises, and other literature written for—and sometimes by—stewards and land agents across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though in some ways prescriptive rather than descriptive[14] of a steward's daily routine and management

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[11] Michie noted this in a comment to a paper I delivered at the Dickens Winter Conference at Louisiana State University in April 2013. That paper was the seed for my chapter on George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

[12] Michie explained this process to me in more detail in a personal conversation held at Elsie Michie's home during the 2013 Dickens Winter Conference.

[13] Those with literary interests, for example, have been drawn to the papers of the Arbury estate, held in the Warwickshire County Record Office, to research the character and activities of Robert Evans, father of George Eliot and steward of the 7,000-acre estate owned by the Newdigate family (Hughes 10).

[14] Most historians, like David Spring in *The English Landed Estate in the Nineteenth Century: Its Administration*, concur that stewarding manuals sometimes established unrealistic expectations about the education and qualifications of stewards, the degree to which they could systematize estate activities, and

practices, these texts still provide insight into the ideological shifts encountered, maneuvered, and communicated by stewards as they carried out their duties. More importantly, their prescriptive nature and wider accessibility allow steward manuals, unlike private correspondence, to publicly perform stewardship, making them more appropriate for examining the full scope of stewards'—and their texts'—mediatory activities. Indeed, just as fictional literary texts use representations of the steward to articulate and navigate the challenge of a changing social landscape, these documents both create and reflect a narrative about stewardship that informs the Victorian ethos. This chapter therefore primarily analyzes this published body of steward literature.

The steward manuals and other documents I discuss in this chapter range from Edward Laurence's seminal 1727 work, *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward*, to G. A. Dean's 1851 *The Land Steward*. Between these two dates, England's burgeoning print culture made increasingly available "a large and expanding collection of books and pamphlets on all branches of [farming technique], although this agricultural literature was highly variable in quality, especially before 1800" (Goddard 361). The content of these works was shaped not only by the agricultural knowledge available, but also by the governmental policies, aesthetic predilections, economic trends, and even population trends at the time of writing. These forces combined to alter the professional status of the steward, which underwent significant changes between 1727 and 1851. This chapter explains the ways in which these changes are manifested in the stewarding texts. Importantly, I demonstrate how stewards' efforts to establish and work within an ethic of care were threatened by—but came to accommodate—the historical forces that they both shaped and were shaped by. In order to establish the contexts in which steward literature

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the amount of work they could single-handedly accomplish on the estate. See for example, Spring's description of the steward's education (101).

negotiated the ethic of care, the remainder of this section reviews the historical developments the steward himself was adapting to.

In the eighteenth century, the landed estate was an omnipresent structure of English social life (Hainsworth 1). Though men with similar duties had been found in rural England for centuries (6), the "full-blown estate steward" appeared during the later Stuart period (7-8). Leading up to this period, stewards had gradually been taking on new duties, and their importance especially increased after 1660, when the Restoration made London more attractive to landlords and increased absenteeism (13).[15] In conjunction with the resulting increase in stewards' responsibilities, English farming and estate management practices and cultural attitudes toward land began to shift. At the center of these changes was the practice of enclosure. Prior to the eighteenth century, much of England's agricultural output was produced through open field strip farming by freeholders or yeomen. Typically, families resided in a village surrounded by open farmland; the village farmers owned scattered strips of this land, which many of them had been working for generations (Martins 35-36). However, this method was inefficient and primarily supported subsistence lifestyles, which was not conducive to feeding a growing urban population (24).[16] It could therefore be beneficial to exchange strips of land with other yeomen to form larger farms (24), and larger landowners often enclosed farms through mutual agreements with small farmers. Beginning at the end of the seventeenth century, however, estates, whose lands were sometimes scattered across England, began

[15] Hainsworth notes that "long and regular Parliaments, the growth of the public service, the navy and the army, the steadily growing significance of London as a marriage market, a financial market, a land market and in general as a social and economic focus for the governing class" made it both necessary and practical for landlords to begin spending a portion of every year in the capital (13).

[16] Beckett explains, "Open field strip farming was widely recognized as being inimical to maximizing output and profit. Reorganization in the form of enclosure offered potential benefits to owners through the adoption of more efficient production methods, full cultivation of common pastures which had formerly been overstocked and poorly maintained, and an increase in output per acre" (*AiE* 172), all necessary to support a growing population.

to be consolidated, and yeomen "were gradually eliminated, as the large estates embarked upon both a long-term policy of acquisition of land and a programme of replacing life tenancies by a more restrictive system of yearly rents and leases" (18). Stewards were instrumental in proposing and implementing these new policies,[17] which "involved a once and for all total re-organisation of the landscape" (24). Such policies accelerated the progress of enclosure, which began to be performed, not through mutual agreement, but by Act of Parliament.

Though economic considerations played a crucial role, the growing landlord interest in enclosure, which first peaked between 1760 and 1780 (Martins 33), was likely influenced by reasons beyond the economic. Sarah Webster notes, "From the seventeenth century, it was considered a moral duty of landowners and farmers to improve land visually and to make it more productive to feed a growing population, utilising concurrently both economic and aesthetic concepts of landscape design and agriculture" (20-21). Tom Williamson suggests that "aesthetic considerations, the increasing fashion for hunting, ease of management and a desire to reduce population" (qtd. in Martins 32) may also have contributed to the moral pressures exerted on landowners in the "age of improvement."

Not satisfied with enclosing the open fields, landowners also began to embark on enclosure of the commons and wastes, areas whose supposed unproductiveness was now morally distasteful.[18] Indeed, proponents argued that commoners, who grazed their

[17] According to Mingay, "There can be little doubt that [stewards] contributed significantly in securing the enclosure of open fields, commons, and waste lands, and in achieving more efficient size and better layout of farms, revision of tenures and careful selection of tenants, and the introduction of improved rotations and soil improvement" (26-27), all activities that increased the value of an estate but that were not without controversy, especially among those who relied on common lands for their livelihood.

[18] Common and waste lands were lands that were not owned by the local peasantry but that were nevertheless available (through communing rights) for commoners' use (Neeson 1). Field commons supplied pasture on which small landholders or cottagers who held "pasture rights" could graze their livestock; waste commons were often expanses unsuitable for grazing or agriculture but that nevertheless

animals in the common pastures and gathered raw materials for construction, local crafts, and fuel from the wastes (Neeson 158) "stood in the way of national economic growth. Instead of the nation's pride they were a measurement of its backwardness" (32). Therefore, although enclosers often felt they were acting for the local and national good, enclosure resulted in the increasing proletarianization of commoners, who were forced into wage labor as the commons disappeared. Perhaps more devastating, however, was "the feeling of belonging, and an overwhelming localness" (Neeson 179) that commoners lost as the landscape was co-opted by those in power. In response to this dispossession from the landscape, John Clare penned the lines, "Fence now meets fence in owners little bounds / Of field and meadow large as garden grounds / In little parcels little minds to please / With men and flocks imprisoned ill at ease" (John Clare 92). Therefore, despite the rhetoric that positioned improvement as an act of care, many viewed it as a destruction of the community that care activities were supposed to maintain.

The disaffection described by Clare signaled a crisis of deference (*AiE* 388) that threatened the social validity of the estate system. The eighteenth-century steward, who relied for his success on "a system which functioned by mutual respect," was also feeling, between 1750 and 1850, "the shock waves of industrialization [ripple] through the countryside threatening the whole fabric of society" ("Landownership and Estate Management" 545) as the old landed, agrarian, feudal economy gave way to a mercantile, capitalist one. As the historical evidence shows, however, these changes only made stewards increasingly necessary, and their salaries and social status generally increased throughout that period (Porter 844). The steward's role in emotionally justifying the

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yielded an abundance of raw materials for building, local crafts, and fuel (158). No special right was required to access the waste; its resources were available to any of the parishioners who cared to exploit them. The commons and wastes often supported entire local economies and a closely interdependent community of self-sufficient yeomen who operated independently of the labor and consumer markets (175).

estate system and its practices, in representing more feudal, familial values even as he engaged in quasi-capitalist enterprises,[19] and in creating a sense of affective community and continuity among disaffected rural people was one of the reasons that his value increased so substantially during this period. This dimension of the steward's usefulness is affirmed in one lord's pining for a steward who was "affectionate as well as faithful and diligent for love rather than for self-interest" (Hughes 185). Indeed, this care for others is inherent in the definition of stewardship, which is the acceptance of responsibility for something from which one ostensibly derives no personal gain.

Developments in the early nineteenth century, however, seemed to be thinning the ranks of such filial men. The growing pursuit of industrial interests and the revolutionary agricultural practices adopted to improve efficiency and productivity resulted in "a more business-like approach to the whole question of [estate] management" ("Landownership and Estate Management" 592). This trend can be attributed in part to the fact that estate managers were now in charge of "one of the largest concentrations of capital and productive capacity that the age could show" (Mingay 3), even overseeing collieries, iron manufactories, and other endeavors that were actually early models of industrial management (4). The increasingly specialized skill-set required to manage an estate gradually led to the professionalization of stewards and the emergence of the professional land agent. For example, eighteenth-century estate management was sometimes undertaken by lawyer-stewards ("Landownership and Estate Management" 592), who typically accepted steward duties in addition to being practicing attorneys. In many ways, this could be a practical arrangement because of the legal nature of many tenant-steward interactions, especially during enclosure, such as drawing up leases and establishing

[19] Beckett suggests that capitalist relations had been defining life in the countryside since the end of demesne farming, when landowners began leasing their farms to tenants (*AiE* 136).

covenants (Corfield 28). In addition, lawyer-stewards were often very active as political agents "due to the close connection between the right to vote and the possession or tenure of land" (Webster 197). The practice of employing lawyers as stewards continued well into the nineteenth century (198), producing such influential men as lawyer-stewards William and Godfrey Tallents, who became "indispensable conduits between the duke [of Newcastle] and his (sometimes hard-pressed) political supporters" (Gaunt 9). Such men certainly exemplified the steward's role as mediator, though they tended to be more detached from the community they served.

Though traditional family retainers, lawyers, and professional land agents coexisted across the centuries, lawyer-stewards became unpopular and were even heartily advised against as early as Edward Laurence's 1727 *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward*. In their place, land agents began to be preferred for their knowledge of husbandry and especially their land valuation skills, which often included expertise as surveyors. These agents began to take on the characteristics of a profession by the late 1700s (Mingay 9), and David Spring even surmises that "the substitution of 'agent' for 'steward'," which Hughes observes was general by 1813 (189), "was a sign of the land agent's growing self-consciousness, of his attempt to make an occupation into a profession" (Spring 97).

Further historical evidence supports this supposition. Professions, "skill tertiary-sector occupations that are organised around a formal corpus of specialist knowledge with both a theoretical and a practical bearing" (Corfield 25), legitimize themselves by establishing standards for and vetting the expertise of their members, usually through special training, and historians indicate that specialized education for land stewards was in place by the late 1700s (Hughes 195). The end of the eighteenth century also saw the establishment of one of the first land agency firms in London by Nathaniel Kent and his

partners, Claridge and Pearce (Mingay 9). Though Webster argues that land agents were still not "a distinctive professional body by the early nineteenth century" (228), the establishment of the Royal Agricultural College in 1845 (29) indicates that by mid-century, professional land agents with theoretical knowledge of farming and management were in high demand on the English landed estate. By 1896, the land agent had clearly joined the ranks of the traditional English professions and was called upon to "prepare himself professionally in a manner analogous to that in which the physician qualifies himself to practice the art of medicine, or a solicitor that of the law" (Spring 101) by receiving a scientific, technical, and classical education in addition to practical experience. In 1902, the land agent profession was finally "recognised with institutional status" (Webster 29), though the landed estate was by this time an endangered institution.

The advancement of the steward's professional identity was evidently a slow and complex process that in some ways led to a more focused execution of care duties but in other ways undermined the traditional steward's focus on duty and responsibility. The professions were characterized by "a distinctive ethos that focuses on 'service'" (Corfield 25) rather than on mutual responsibilities, and the system of loyalty connecting patrons and professionals "was gradually replaced by a more autonomous client-professional relationship" (28) that de-emphasized personal ties. This depersonalization also began to be reflected in other associations previously defined by duties and obligations: "The landowner and his tenant should be considered as a salesman and his customer" wrote G. A. Dean in his 1851 *The Land Steward* (15), revealing the degree to which affective values could be excised from such relations.

Complicating the conflict between care ethics and the detachment sometimes necessitated by a professional code was the conflict between the economic forces that motivated the steward's professionalization and the lingering feudalism of English

landownership, which remained a source of wealth and power even into the 1880s (Gerard 272).[20] Though managing an estate on such "pre-industrial" terms (273) required intimate engagement with the people who lived on it, a professional was pressured to improve an estate's profitably, even at the expense of relationships. Efficiency and sympathy maintained an uneasy coexistence throughout the nineteenth century as industrial and pre-industrial modes overlapped, and the steward's job as mediator became focused on reconciling the two systems. Indeed, the landed classes' longevity has been ascribed both to their "continued insistence on landownership as the legitimate source of power—and their willingness to compromise, adapt, and reform" (272), a process in which the steward or agent was an essential mediator, as this chapter demonstrates. Nevertheless, "The increasing influence of […] professional men in estate management serves as an indicator of the growing distance between landlord and tenant, which was reinforced by the professional insistence on the primacy of economic considerations over traditional relationships" (Porter 847). Confirming this tendency, Spring observes that "If Surtees was correct in his observation that 'the old-fashioned agents' would 'always rather excite their principals to compassion than urge the tenants to activity', there would seem to be less compassion in the hearts of a later generation of agents" (110). As this history indicates, both landowners and stewards in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were struggling to accommodate, reconcile, and even preserve the conservative values inherent in their positions or roles as they faced the need to adapt to more

[20] Gerard notes that in 1815, "the landed classes' values were derived from the pre-industrial agrarian society of earlier centuries, in which the main source of wealth, and thus political and social power, was the landed estate" (273). Even after the 1832 Reform Bill, Wellington noted that the gentry were still able to sway voters by wielding the power of their property (Clark 556), largely through their estate managers, who cultivated the loyalties of the estate's tenants and the local freeholders. By the 1880s, the great landowners reportedly still owned about 24 percent of England (Martins 27).

competitive, complex economic demands and growing skepticism about existing social structures.

However, despite the trend toward more business-like relations, the steward or land agent's task remained essentially social, and the tension between more affective methods of management and the need to achieve efficiency and profit is apparent in the literature written for stewards. The ways in which this tension is negotiated is the subject of the rest of this chapter. In the sections that follow, I analyze the ways in which traditional values based on sympathy and relationship and professional values interwove and sometimes clashed in several popular steward manuals published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, supplemented by the words and records of actual stewards. The chapter argues that, in addition to revealing a discourse about the ethic of care, the steward manual itself attempts to become an act of stewardship through which community relations could be mediated.

As discussed in the Introduction, the term "ethic of care" is borrowed from Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982). I use the framework established by Gilligan's work to analyze the interaction between sympathetic relations and the distance and efficiency promoted by professionalization. Within this framework, individuals make moral decisions and resolve conflict based on one of two paradigms: a rhetoric of responsibility, which approaches such dilemmas by asking how "to lead a moral life which includes obligations to myself and my family and people in general" (21), and the rhetoric of rights, which asks how one can "exercise one's rights without interfering with the rights of others" (21). I argue that these paradigms roughly describe the position of the steward, poised between a pre-industrial ideal of traditional obligations and a more capitalist system that subordinates connection and other-centeredness to profit and independent individual endeavor. However, in Gilligan's framework, neither of these

paradigms represents a completed moral development. Rather, as individuals encounter stress (115), they only grow when they "recognize that self and other are interdependent," which "dissipates the tension between selfishness and responsibility" (74). Therefore, according to Gilligan, those who insist on the primacy of relationship must learn to limit responsibilities to others in order to care for self, and those who subscribe to the rights paradigm must learn to acknowledge "the differences between other and self" (166) that make objective standards of justice or achievement irrelevant. It is this "awareness of multiple truths" that "leads to a relativizing of equality in the direction of equity and gives rise to an ethic of generosity and care" (166). Similarly, in the texts studied in this chapter, stewards' attempts to mediate social changes in their communities demonstrate the ethic of care as they struggle to responsibly balance scientific improvement with needs arising from lived experience on the land, justice with understanding of individual circumstances, and awareness of professional culture with knowledge of local culture to meet the needs of the community, their employers, and themselves and their colleagues.

This chapter also compares the expectations of the steward described in land management manuals with the duties and discourses associated with other potential steward figures. These figures include estate owners and female figures such as housekeepers and wives. Discussing these figures allows the stewardship discourse to be analyzed along gender lines, as Gilligan's assignation of the rhetoric of responsibility to female voices seems to require. Determining the differences in the discourses established for male and female stewards in the nineteenth century also establishes a foundation and precedent for the subsequent chapters, which identify stewards of both genders and trace the processes through which they develop and implement an ethic of care. In addition, it is important to determine how gender roles define or are defined by the stewardship ethos over time and to acknowledge the many ways in which stewardship was itself iterated

and transformed by individuals and groups whose influence was also tied to the land and landscape.

Finally, I trace the changing attitudes toward land and landscape represented in the steward manuals and correlate these shifts with policy changes and the changing roles of those involved in land management. Because landscape was a crucial medium through which people experienced their relationships and developed individual and community identities, it is necessary to determine what types of landscapes were being promoted in the steward literature and their significance to and role in the steward's project of mediating social change in acceptable, ethical ways.

Relying on these methodological approaches, the first section, "The Steward's Library" introduces and describes the primary texts analyzed in this chapter. In this section, I also analyze the subject position from which the authors of the steward manuals spoke and their texts' imagined audience to establish the texts as creators, examplars, and sustainers of a discourse about "good" stewardship. In the next two sections, the conclusion that these texts position the steward as a mediator of social change through an ethic of care, community, and responsibility is addressed. "Agents of Change" discusses the steward's construction and role as mediator, and "An Ideal Steward" analyzes how the principle of care was adapted and preserved to construct a true steward capable of satisfying and creating harmony among a multitude of communities and their interests in an ethical way.

The Steward's Library

The primary texts analyzed in this chapter span the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though written at different times and therefore in different social and political contexts, the texts' purposes and approaches to their audiences are strikingly similar. In

this section, I discuss these similarities, including the authors' deliberate distancing of themselves from the steward profession, to indicate the steward manual's function as not just a practical text but a purveyor of ideology.

The earliest steward manual discussed here, Edward Laurence's *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward* (1727), became a seminal work that later literature for stewards would build on, refer to, and revise. Charles Ley's 1786 *The Nobleman, Gentleman, Land Steward, and Surveyor's Compleat Guide*, for example, appears to have been almost wholly borrowed from Laurence's text with only minor adjustments and additions. Laurence styled himself a surveyor; surveyors were both forerunners of the land agent and developed their own science parallel to that of the land agent. They helped estate owners determine the value of their estates by providing accurate estimates of the amount and quality of the land they owned. They also helped maximize their employers' profits by laying out the estate's farms in the most efficient manner. Ley was also of the surveyor ilk, advertising, among his many services, "Estates accurately surveyed for improvements, and plans neatly delineated and embellished"; "gardens, pleasure grounds, parks, plantations, etc. laid out and properly decorated agreeable to the principles of modern gardening"; and "common field lands divided and laid out agreeable to Act of Parliament." Both texts focus on describing the best methods for estate improvement, primarily by discussing the most advantageous agricultural practices and the most effective tenant management policies.

Also published in the eighteenth century was Nathaniel Kent's *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (1775). This work, based on Kent's time as a government employee in Flanders, where he incidentally studied Flemish husbandry (Horn 3), also became greatly influential in England. Its reception was so successful that Kent eventually established a land agency business in the 1790s with William Pearce and John

Claridge and became the steward of the royal estates at Richmond Park and Windsor Great Park (1). His publication strongly emphasized enclosure, small farms, and the implementation of the Flemish system of crop rotation (4-5). It also expressed the necessity of attending to the welfare of agricultural laborers and was one of the first manuals to include plans for model cottages (Bayne par. 2).[21] The author of *On the Landed Property of England* (1804), William Marshall, was Kent's contemporary and also a land agent. Unlike Kent, he favored large farms as the setting for implementing agricultural improvements (Horn 5), but he shared Kent's hearty approval of enclosure. The author of numerous agricultural texts, he abstracted his important work on estate management in 1806, publishing it as the abridged *On the Management of Landed Estates*.

In the same year in which this abridgment appeared, the second edition of John Lawrence's *The Modern Land Steward*, first published in 1801, was printed. Lawrence was the author of several agricultural texts published at the turn of the century, including the popular *New Farmer's Calendar*[22] published in 1800. Lawrence identified himself in the *New Farmer's Calendar* as a farmer and breeder, and his advice to stewards was consciously in conversation with Laurence's *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward* and John Mordant's 1761 *Complete Steward*,[23] both of which he refers to in his introduction.

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[21] Though not the first manual to suggest an affective mode of management, Kent's text uses the most compassionate language of the texts studied in this chapter. His comments on the state of cottages, for example, include the sentiment that "The shattered hovels which half the poor of this kingdom are obliged to put up with, is truly affecting to a heart fraught with humanity" (207).

[22] The "calendar" was a common example of eighteenth century farming literature made especially popular by Arthur Young's *Farmer's Kalendar*, published in the 1770s. It typically organized its farming advice by month, directing the agriculturalist what and when to plant and harvest, how to care for livestock, how to store feed, and other topics relevant to those involved in husbandry. Calendars were practical manuals, "unlikely to have been bought only by the leisured spectator of the rural scene" (Goddard 369).

[23] To avoid redundancy, Mordant's treatise is only briefly referred to in this chapter. Lawrence asserts that the *Complete Steward* takes Laurence's work as a model, and Lawrence, in his turn, has relied on both Mordant's and Laurence's work to compose his treatise. In addition, Mordant's manual is primarily a

He also references earlier works by William Marshall in his discussion of the steward's duties and other topics. Lawrence's manual primarily addresses the most contemporary land improvement practices, emphasizing the essential role of skilled land stewards in realizing the desired progress of agricultural reforms.

Finally, the latest text analyzed, George A. Dean's *The Land Steward*, was published in 1851. Identifying himself as "an agricultural architect and engineer" and a "member of the royal agricultural society of England," Dean belonged to a profession that was clearly more defined than his predecessors'. However, the aims of this treatise, which Dean establishes in his dedication, are remarkably consistent with the aims expressed by the previous authors: "to diffuse a sounder and more scientific knowledge of agricultural pursuits, as well as to induce a more profitable cultivation of the soil, and to effect a more equitable relationship between landlord and tenant" (iii). Indeed, his chapters cover many of the same topics discussed by Laurence and those agents writing in the early 1800s. Only Edward Laurence's manual, as John Lawrence suggested, seems to comprise entirely original material.

Interestingly, this particular family of steward manuals is written by men who all profess to be land agents or members of more technical professions, which to varying degrees positions the writers outside of the brotherhood of traditional stewards. Laurence, for example, clearly separated himself from stewards in his text, proclaiming that he had resolved "Not to engage myself in the Office and Business of a Steward, let the Proposals and Offers be ever so advantageous" (x). However, upon closer inspection, this distancing of themselves from the (sometimes vilified) subject of their works is a deliberate rhetorical move on the part of the authors that allows them (and their texts) to

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collection of tables for calculating interest on loans, estimating the value of timber, and determining how much rent each tenant owes.

perform and thereby model ideal stewardship. Laurence, for instance, protests too much when he continues to aver that he nobly kept his resolution to never accept the position of steward, even "under pretty strong and repeated Temptations from several Quarters to break it" (x). In other words, Laurence is trying to associate himself with the values he finds most necessary in a steward, "Truth and Honesty" (xi), by dissociating himself from a class of persons he sees as scandalous.[24] He then uses this position of moral superiority to assert his expertise—knowledge he deems necessary for proper stewardship and that only he can supply:

> And altho' I am not so vain as to think this short Essay will have any such abiding Effect upon the Morals of Persons concern'd, […] or tempt me to break my first Resolution [to never be a steward], yet at least this pleasure and satisfaction I shall have in this Performance, that I shall honestly lay before the World what I have gather'd from labour'd Diligence and Observation, and what I take to be right in the Office and Duty of a Steward. (x-xi)

Framed by his disavowals, then, Laurence establishes himself, through the act of writing, as the model steward: hardworking, honest, perspicacious, and laboring and sacrificing, not for his own profit, but for his audience's. He even dedicates a section of his treatise to the improvement of the farmer (xi), the education of whom was becoming one of a steward's foremost duties, as will be discussed below.

In keeping with this rhetorical position taken by the authors, these supposedly external observers address, to different extents, audiences that would not have officially identified themselves with the occupation or title of steward or land agent. Edward Laurence, for example, inaugurates the genre by dedicating his text to a member of the

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[24] The depiction of stewards as such was not uncommon among those who saw the damage that bad stewards could do to an estate's income and reputation and the tenants' livelihoods. G. E. Mingay notes that "the 'arts of stewards' was a synonym for dishonesty and corruption" (11) in the eighteenth century but assures us that "the great majority of them, were honest and faithful in their duties" (11). Stewards were often completely in charge of the estate's finances, and any unscrupulousness would certainly have had very visible consequences for the master and the tenants.

aristocracy, the Duchess of Buckingham and Normanby, who at the time was Catherine Darnley. Darnley was the illegitimate daughter of James II[25] but, perhaps more importantly, was a widow who by all appearances had taken the management of her late husband's estates into her own hands.[26] The significance of the Duchess's apparent stewardship will be analyzed at length in the section titled "An Ideal Steward." Relevant to the present point is that much of Laurence's advice, such as his opening guide for how and what type of steward to choose, is obviously aimed at landowners, and his intended audience is made clear when he indicates that his "articles" are addressed to "both Nobleman and Steward" (1). By positioning themselves as the servants of the nobility, the authors of steward manuals, despite their professional status, were able to once again adopt the position of steward through their literary endeavors.

Several additional details mentioned in Laurence's dedication to the Duchess illustrate the potency of both the position of expertise established by these authors and their choice to address a non-professional audience. By mentioning that the Duchess had been instrumental in "preserving and retrieving an Estate ready to be swallowed up in Ruin; not so much by the Neglect, as the Villany [sic] of a Set of unjust Stewards, who had made all manner of ill Uses of the late Duke's Absence from them" (vi), Laurence's dedication is offering more than the obligatory respect paid to a patron. Rather, he is actually setting up the argument of *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward*, a text that, despite the practical implications of "Articles" such as "Cow-dung not to be burnt for

[25] The Stuarts, incidentally, were descended from Robert the Steward, and Sam Baker has proposed that this name is appropriate to the role the Stuarts played England's history. He writes, "the Stuarts, after all, descend from Robert the Steward to Robert the Bruce. […] It might be that even the absolutist Stuarts could be understood, in the larger scheme of things, to be stewards of a throne soon to be passed along to the Kings George: to kings who would identify themselves explicitly with a georgic conception of their office."

[26] Upon her husband John Sheffield's death in 1721, only one of the couple's sons remained alive: Edmund Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham. He therefore succeeded his father at the age of 5, and the onus of running the estates evidently fell to Catherine who, if Laurence is correct, was an able and intelligent manager.

fuel," is clearly an act of persuasion. In his preface, Laurence continues to establish the thesis that dishonest stewards have been the ruin of many good estates and that his proposals are acts of care, helping landowners protect themselves against the knavish breed by officially establishing what the duties of a steward ought to be. Through similar mechanisms, the authors of each of the steward manuals suggest that their authorship is proof of their able stewardship and present their texts as acts of loyalty, care, and duty to their audience of estate owners—in other words, as acts of stewardship.

The manuals published after Laurence's clearly took his lead in addressing estate owners. In some cases, their titles establish their treatment of the steward as an object of study, such as *The Land Steward* and *The Modern Land Steward*. Lawrence's *The Modern Land Steward*, "in which the duties and functions of Stewardship are considered and explained" is "inscribed" to "the Lords and Proprietors of the soil of this country." Dean's *The Land Steward* ostensibly targets a narrower professional audience, having been published by a firm touting itself as "Atchley and Co., architectural and engineering publishers," but he still addresses landowners with advice about choosing stewards, recommending certain qualities and skills (e.g., 237-238). And while Marshall's longer text was abridged specifically "for the Use of Professional Men," none of the manuals so thoroughly addressed the aristocratic audience as Kent's. His title, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property*, clearly identifies his target audience as landed gentlemen.

In fact, the degree to which the author of a treatise about stewards identified with the stewarding profession and intentionally addressed landowners, the more clearly the work became an act of stewardship. Kent's *Hints to Gentleman of Landed Property* is probably the best exemplar of this argument. Not only does Kent's book almost exclusively address landholders, but it was so successful at convincing his audience of his own expertise and good stewardship that his book actually turned him into a professional

estate agent with a successful firm.[27] Kent's directions to this audience clearly establish the author's—and therefore the steward's—the role as a mediator by positioning himself between the landlord and the more plebian community members. In the following passage, he performs the steward's role of informing a somewhat distant landed gentleman of his integral role in the lives of his dependents, urging him to fulfill his obligations:

> To gentlemen whose property is realized in land […] it becomes a duty, which they owe not only to themselves but to the community […] to make the most of his property, by every laudable means; and as the Public is likewise interested in the produce of the earth, which the landholder has greatly in his power to increase or diminish by good or bad management. (7-8)

Answerable to the members of their community, Kent assigns landowners a moral duty to improve their estates, much as a steward was required to "improve his employer's property to the utmost" as "an active manager" (Hainsworth 8). In fact, throughout his text, Kent emphasizes the steward-like role of landowners, pointing out the gentleman's own role as mediator: "he is one of the strongest links in society between government and the lower order of mankind" (Kent 279). Kent, therefore, positions his landed audience as apprentice stewards, rendering them the students of good stewardship, while simultaneously translating stewarding duties into the realms of the nobility.

Therefore, Laurence's, Kent's and the other writers' artificial delimitation of a steward's specific set of duties indicates that these manuals were not simply reference works that stewards consulted to assist them in conducting the technical aspects of their business. Rather, they were purveyors of a discourse about good stewardship.

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[27] Before the enthusiastic reception of his text, Kent was a government employee, first as a clerk at a Portsmouth dockyard, then as a supervisor of Seven Years' War prisoners. He next became a secretary working for Admiral Geary and then Sir James Porter. It was while working for Porter that he traveled abroad and observed the farming practices of the Flemish people, which he greatly admired. This experience provided the material for *Hints* and secured him his first stewardship managing Admiral Lord Anson's Norfolk property and his Hevingham county residence, Rippon Hall (Horn 1-3).

Furthermore, the steward imagined by the manuals was a prescriptive ideal whose characteristics reflected the agricultural needs of the nation, the ideological needs of the aristocracy, and the sociological needs of the profession. For example, Laurence's text establishes stewardship as a service organization answering to the aristocracy. When addressing the question, "Who would be a Lord's Steward, if they [the stewards] must have so many Eyes, and so many Checques upon them?" he answers, "let such consider, that Losers and the Cheated have not only a right to complain, but also to contrive the best Methods to secure and defend themselves from future Injuries. Neither can I think that an honest and wise Steward will have any Reason to dislike these methods" (28). For Laurence's steward, professional freedom should not be valued above the trust and loyalty that make productive interdependence possible. Laurence's subsequent recommendation that stewards who have proved themselves worthy could be rewarded by their employers with more leeway (29) reflects the power of the system of patronage governing eighteenth century relations between employer and employed and the more absolute absorption of the steward's identity into that of the particular estate for which he worked. This ideal of service continued to inform the steward's professional identity in the nineteenth century, when it began to conflict with new calls for efficiency in a growing capitalist market.

Agents of Change

Before I examine the ethic of care imagined by each of these texts, it is necessary to demonstrate the steward's role as mediator and discuss how the contexts, purposes, and effects of this mediation are represented in the treatises discussed above. The previous section introduced the idea that authors of stewarding manuals, the texts themselves, and their readers, whether professional or aristocratic, could take on the role

of steward by mediating, for example, landlords' relationships with their tenants or the parish's relationship with the government. An overarching argument of this dissertation is that stewards engaged in acts of mediation to facilitate social change through an ethic of care, a method that respected and sought the well-being and interdependence of all members of the community and was inherent in the steward's position as one responsible for but not the owner of the property he managed. This section, therefore, furthers this argument by analyzing how and on what social, political, moral, and emotional levels the stewarding texts construe the steward as a mediator, emphasizing the steward's role as a political agent and a mediator of knowledge.

The steward literature unanimously embeds the steward and his duties in a social context. Some historians have described the rural social structure as an "'agricultural family,' comprising landowner, agent, tenant, and laborer" (Spring 119). Recalling the concept of Gemeinschaft, the steward is imagined as part of a social ecosystem whose fragile balance requires the utmost care to maintain: "The landlord, tenant, and labourer are intimately connected together, and have their reciprocal interest, though in different proportions; and when the just equilibrium between them is interrupted, the one or the other must receive injury" (Kent 234). The details of this mutual dependency are described by Beckett: "The combination of an enlightened landlord ready to venture capital in his estate, a forward-looking and enthusiastic agent, and farmers both able and willing to promote better agriculture, was more than likely to bring progress when economic conditions and terrains permitted" ("Landownership and Estate Management" 590); when each member of this triumvirate fulfilled his responsibilities to the others, his own prosperity was assured.

The centrality of the landowner-steward-tenant constellation and the mediatory position of the steward within it is developed in the discourse of the steward manuals and

readily apparent in many of their extended titles. Lawrence's *The Modern Land Steward* is followed by the addendum: "in which the duties and functions of Stewardship are considered and explained, with their several relations to the interests of the Landlord, Tenant, and the Public." As in Laurence's title, it is the steward as a responsibility-bearer that is emphasized. He is here defined by his relationships with other community members, becoming a steward of the interests of each and thereby leveling the association among all as he carries out his "duties and functions." Also realizing the symbiotic nature of the steward's social relationships, Laurence added an appendix to his manual directed at the farmer: "In directing the Duty and Office of a Steward, I found myself also under a Necessity of saying something to the Farmer, whose Duty in many Cases is pretty strongly connected with that of the Steward, and without whose Diligence and Skill the Steward himself labours under great Difficulties and unjust Reproofs" (xii). In the 1731 edition, the first instances of "Steward" and "Farmer" in this passage are both in blackletter, set apart from the italic and roman typeface used for the rest of the text and seeming to convey a sense of shared importance between the roles. The steward is clearly not operating in a vacuum or simply to maintain his own status. Rather, his identity is inextricably connected with those in his community who depend on his expertise and social skills.

On a larger scale, the individual, local efforts of stewards were at the center of England's social changes and could create ripple effects that eventually made waves in England's political and economic center. Hainsworth suggests that the steward "was a 'mediator' in the anthropological sense of the word […] the vital 'broker' between the 'Great Society' of metropolitan London and the local community" (Hainsworth 3), placing the steward's mediating efforts on a national scale. As political mediators, this description does not appear to be exaggerated. Webster's study of the agents of the

Petworth estates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals that they "were influential on both a local and national scale," frequently traveling to their employer's scattered properties and to London, where they purchased land or attended Parliament to push through enclosure or navigation bills (204). In many cases, the roles of estate agent and political agent merged on estates with great political influence. The political life of Nottinghamshire, for example, was influenced and controlled for many years by the duke of Newcastle's agents. One historian writes that "The lightning rod for discontent with Newcastle's political and property interests in Newark were his agents and supporters in the town" (Gaunt 8). Among these agents was William Edward Tallents, who became the fourth duke of Newcastle's land steward and political agent in 1826. Tallents's "role as superintendent of the family's substantial estate and electoral influence in the Newark constituency and (after 1832) south Nottinghamshire brought him into close working contact with successive MPs in the Newcastle interest" ("Tallents, William Edward" par. 4) and, eventually, William Gladstone, whom he mentored. By virtue of their position on landed estates, which maintained their political social efficacy well into the 1880s (Gerard 272; AiE 456), stewards exercised considerable influence in national political life.

Reflecting this role as mediator of public opinion, forging lines of communication to connect estate, city, county, and national circles, steward manuals were well-placed—in the hands of aristocratic and professional men—to become such mediators themselves. Indeed, almost all of the manuals open with overtly opinionated statements on current political issues before settling into their descriptions of different types of drainage and discussions of the relative merits of cross-bred turnips. John Lawrence evidently hoped to instill a sense of urgency and weighty responsibility in his audience in the opening lines of his introduction: "The duties of Land Stewardship, always important, are at the present

moment of greatly enhanced consequence" (v). He continues, placing the steward at the center of several current national issues, intimating that "on the abilities of agents to estates, will, in a considerable measure, depend" England's complete agricultural reform and the resolution to the widespread misery and disaffection among the peasantry and the laboring poor (v).

The central importance of the steward in political questions is again implied on page one, where, instead of discussing the character and duties of stewardship, a topic relegated to page thirty-nine, Lawrence finds it necessary to make nearly forty pages of remarks on "those great leading topics of political economy, which ought to be clearly and fundamentally understood by the lord and proprietors of the soil in every country, and on which it behoves their chief agents not to be, at least, totally uninformed" (1). It soon becomes clear that he is primarily concerned with refuting the fear of excessive population, arguing instead that as population increases, so does a nation's prosperity (2). In developing his argument, he touches on the odiousness of clerical celibacy, the Chinese mode of government, and the English Corn Laws, praising instead political freedom, laissez-faire economics and the capitalist's right to "seek the means of life wherever […] honest labour will be most productive" (4). Lawrence is clearly using his manual as a platform from which to mediate political issues and in doing so inextricably associates the steward's activities with national political decisions.

Importantly, Lawrence emphasizes the role of print culture in communicating what he believes to be harmful and erroneous ideas to the public, blaming "vehement orations," "paragraphs," and "popular ballads" for "fostering […] madness in the minds of the vulgar, and goading them into action" (15). "Legal code" and "books of precedent" are likewise blamed for confusion and wrong-headedness in higher spheres (16). Therefore, it is not only the men or groups with influence that participate in negotiating

legal and social changes, but texts as well: "The works of a writer who has acquired…much celebrity, are capable of doing great good or great harm in a country" (26), he declares. The good texts are those that, like proper stewards, seek the public good, economic prosperity, and to incite fair, moral dealings instead of underhandedness. Holding up a "very respectable" London paper that "opposed all these leveling, anarchical, and dangerous schemes, honestly meeting the vulgar prejudices of the day, with the most pointed and unanswerable arguments" (20), Lawrence evidently aspires to author a text with similar qualities and efficacy, declaring, "The public good, I trust will be my warrant, for changing one of the words of an old adage; let it run in future, de mortuis nil nisi verum [of the dead, nothing but truth is to be said]," emphasizing his integrity and commitment to truth as a writer in spite of popular opinion or tradition.[28] Like the stewards and noblemen with whom he was communicating, then, Lawrence treats his text as an important agent of change in England, one whose mode of communication was more ethical and, with its focus on the public good, more caring this his opponents'.

Dean's 1851 steward manual bears remarkable similarities to Lawrence's text. Like Lawrence, Dean begins with a politically minded preface and spends several pages of his first chapter remarking on legal and legislative developments. Echoing Lawrence's opening disclaimer ("Preparatory to a discussion of the immediate subject of this work, it will not be inutile or irrelevant to make a few general observations […]" (1)), Dean begins his first chapter by stating, "Before entering upon the subject of tenure, we propose to make a few remarks upon the so-called question of "Tenant right" (11), establishing his text as a platform for a political agenda. Indeed, Dean is detailed in his

[28] The original phrase, *de mortuis nihil nisi bonum*, is an injunction not to speak ill of the dead.

discussion, citing recent bills, local responses, and historical precedent. In his preface, he explains,

> our desire has been to call attention to the subject [of Tenant Right], to assist in ensuring justice to all parties, and to prevent unnecessary or improper legislative interference. […] Should our labours prove of the least value in assisting the legislature in effecting the contemplated change, or in obviating the necessity for it, our object will be achieved, and it will afford us infinite gratification. (vi)

Dean's tone is deferential, emphasizing his stewardly service on behalf of the nation's law-makers. He positions his "labor" (the text he is introducing) as a mediator, as influencing major legislative decisions from the steward's position in more local affairs. Dean's text, therefore, like Lawrence's, continues the pattern of representing both stewards and their texts as agents of political change.

In their role as political mediators, stewards also engaged in mediating new legislation or initiatives from the opposite direction—from the center of government to the rural community. In addition to petitioning for Acts of Enclosure in London, they were, of course, crucial in carrying out enclosure on their own estates. H. J. Habakkuk confirms that "they contributed significantly in securing the enclosure of open fields, commons, and waste lands" (qtd. in Mingay 26), and the policy and practice of enclosure is recommended in all of the stewarding texts examined in this chapter. By universally promoting enclosure, which Nathaniel Kent, for one, claims that he does because of his "public zeal" (92), these texts attempt to influence local changes that they expect will promote the nation's general welfare. For example, Edward Laurence suggested that tenants be made to sign an agreement prior to the enclosure of commons admitting that their reluctance to enclose was a "Superstition" that had hindered "noble Improvements" (58). The agreement's first lines, which read, "Whereas, it is found, by long Experience, that Common or Open Fields, where-ever they are suffered or continued, are great

Hindrances to a publick Good, and the honest Improvement which every one might make of his own, by diligence […]" (58), emphasize not only the public but the personal effects of such changes. In fact, enclosure is presented as rewarding the honest, morally approvable efforts of the freeholder, affording him "Security […] of enjoying the quiet Possession of his Labour and Care" (60). Laurence is therefore able to present the steward's maneuvering for enclosure, often seen as way to enrich the landowner at the expense of the poor, as an act of care in which "we" the "Freeholders" (60) consent to accept responsibility for their neighbors' peace and prosperity. In this example, the steward cites principles of care to justify the implementation of top-down changes at the local level.

As Laurence's opinion demonstrates, moreover, enclosure cannot be extricated from the national movement for agricultural reform and "improvement," in which stewards played an indispensable role. As Kent asserts, "all improvements in agriculture, which carry grand weight, and in the end become national objects, must be effected by the individual" (261). Indeed, Webster describes stewards as "competent and influential figures in agricultural improvement" (30) who "mediated complex and wide-ranging estate improvements" primarily "by increasing the efficiency of estate management" (197). Numbered among these able managers was John Yule, agent to Sir James Graham. He is credited with turning Netherby, one of Graham's estates in north Cumberland into "a great agricultural estate, a model of good farming" in the 1820s ("Landownership and Estate Management" 571). Such men were tirelessly engaged in activities designed to achieve "more efficient size and better layout of farms, revision of tenures and careful selection of tenants, and the introduction of improved rotations and soil improvement" (Mingay 26). The beneficial effects of these efforts made stewards valued in political

spheres, as many of the manuals' concerns about population indicate, and at all levels of society.

Key to implementing such changes was the steward's role as an educator—a mediator and communicator of knowledge. Webster confirms that stewards were busily engaged in disseminating agricultural knowledge, such as newly developed agricultural techniques, to tenants (197). The steward gained much of this knowledge through farming and stewarding texts, such as the ones discussed in this chapter; through travel to other areas of England where farming practices differed; and through membership in agricultural societies. Though a writer like Dean may have been in the position to receive theoretical and practical training at an agricultural school, such an education was just becoming available in the mid-nineteenth century, and most stewards' formal education was likely to be slight. Instead, apprenticeship and attendance at local agricultural society meetings provided informal educational settings for aspiring stewards (Spring 102). Nicholas Goddard writes that by 1820 more than fifty local societies dotted England (375) and that their meetings "facilitated exchange of information" and "performed significant work" (377), both intellectual and practical. The Workington Agricultural Society, for example, "was attended by agriculturalists from all over the country" and was said to have transformed farming in Cumberland between 1800 and 1810 (377). These groups often sponsored the production of agricultural texts that became key means of disseminating knowledge among attendees.

Importantly, despite the proliferation of agricultural literature such as books, treatises, and newspapers, "many indications suggest that even those books deemed to be generally useful were restricted in their circulation, being confined to those members of the agricultural community who had the means, inclination, and leisure to purchase and read them" (366). Therefore, farmers and tenants themselves were unlikely to read about

the latest fertilizers or crop-rotation methods first-hand; such information was passed down to them through stewards and landlords. Beckett writes of the possibility that "surveyors like Nathaniel Kent actually played the most critical role in encouraging the dissemination and adoption of new ideas" ("Landownership and Estate Management" 571). Indeed, like their texts, stewards often had to be practiced in arts of persuasion "to arouse the enthusiasm" of skeptical tenants (Spring 116) towards improvements like draining. "Instructing [tenants] in the most recent developments in the agricultural world" (118) was therefore often an intimate, face-to-face process. Some earnest stewards provided libraries and established societies and prizes to encourage innovation among their farmers, bringing them together in communities of mutual exchange. Personal contact with tenants was thought to be especially effective, and many received instruction directly from the steward's hands: in 1843, George Eliot's father, Robert Evans, is known to have "enthusiastically supplied the Arbury tenants with copies of *Chemistry Made Easy for the use of the Agriculturalist*" (Hughes 349 n. 20). This example indicates that even when texts were available to tenants, the steward still played a key mediating role in selecting and distributing such works.

Tenant education is a common theme in the stewarding treatises, in which the steward's role as a mediator of knowledge is seen as inextricable from his role in mediating social change and from his ethic of care. There is a general consensus across the manuals that the study of agriculture "tends to the increase of private property and public benefit" (Kent 7)—that education contributes to a better balance between responsibility and individualism. This balance was better achieved when the steward himself was the student. Charles Ley wrote in his stewarding manual that "the well educated steward or bailiff is much more likely to do strict justice to his employer, than the illiterate" (21), ostensibly because the agricultural education provides an opportunity

for moral development: “To the contemplative mind nothing can be more suitable than engaging in rural affairs, which strengthens the whole human frame, invigorates the understanding as well as the bodily members, and gives an exalted turn to thought” (21). Diligent, educated labor performed in a bucolic setting was seen to make steward and tenantry better able to create and sustain a cooperative, caring community.

Notably, the steward’s role as a student sometimes allowed him to mediate knowledge from the bottom up. Kent seems to imply that the steward could learn about agriculture on his estate, possibly from his own tenants, when he states that “Nor is this study, so necessary and serviceable to mankind, attended with much difficulty and labour, for its chief instructions are to be found in the pleasant and open fields, and not confined in the library” (7). In confirmation of this interpretation, several of the manuals, including Edward Laurence’s, suggest that tenants could be imported from areas of England known to have better farming practices to help others on the estate learn more profitable farming methods (e.g., Laurence 6). Kent’s passage also suggests that stewards could be actively engaged in agricultural experimentation, an idea Dean also promotes: “All experiments should be carried on by landowners, for it cannot be expected that tenants should risk their means in carrying out experiments which, if successful are of infinitely greater benefit to their landlords than to themselves” (236). Taking on the characteristics of a steward (or delegating the proposed experimentation to his steward), it is the landlord who, by proper self-education, becomes the type of educator who can preserve harmony between self-enrichment and care for his tenants.

Though self-education was important, the steward’s knowledge had to be conveyed to the tenants for estate improvement to occur and for the landowner to see an increase in profits, and this act of education could be construed as an act of care. The care aspect of tenant education is exemplified in Laurence’s discussion of the practice of

forced farm amalgamation for the purpose of raising rents, which often increased taxes and tithes for the remaining tenants. "The true Remedy therefore for this Misfortune is not the violent one of forcing them beyond their Power, but the gentle and rational one of persuading, and influencing them in all the thriving Arts of making the best of their Farms, that they may be able, not only to pay, but to advance their Rents," he argues (5). Tenants kept in ignorance are also kept in poverty, he advises, adding that "as soon as [the tenants he observed] became better instructed by the Steward to practice all the best and latest Methods of Husbandry, they presently could bear an Advance of Rents; and not only suffered it, but grew richer upon it, and thrived better than they did before at the Old Rent" (5). In Laurence's opinion, empowering tenants by helping them implement crop rotation and telling them about the best fertilizers (5) is an act of compassion that enriches both the farmer and his landlord, who eventually, through teaching, care, and patience towards his dependents, reaps the reward of a more impressive income.

Laurence was also interested in an additional aspect of education: "His own Ingenuity and Contrivance added to his Steward's Care, will quickly introduce Politeness into his Country" (80), he declared, indicating that virtue could be a desired outcome of combining practical education with care activities. His care ethics-based program rendered the steward a more effective mediator, making him "beloved and popular, at the same time when he is furnished with larger Abilities to supply his own and his Country's Wants" (80). Stewards, as Webster notes, therefore had a broader concept of education; in addition to farming techniques, they also "supervised the 'moral improvement' of tenants" (197). In the nineteenth century, stewards were even "more inclined to 'urge their tenants to activity'" (Spring 106), both from a farming and a moral perspective. Dean's manual supports this claim, insisting that, in addition to knowledge, the tenants be inculcated with the spirit of improvement: "[The steward] might, and ought, as the

representative of his employer, to promote and strengthen a spirit of inquiry, correct habits of observation, and inculcate purer and more elevated tastes among the tenantry and labourers" (237). As improvement spread from the practical realm into the moral realm, the ethic of care became increasingly relevant to the steward's activities, especially as social and political changes jeopardized the relationships that had formerly helped estates—and the nation—to prosper.

An Ideal Steward

The steward described in the stewarding manuals is, as I have already suggested, a projection of the ideologies dominant in the Englands of each of the authors. This was also true for the ethic of care with which the steward carried out his mediating activities. This section describes how the steward and his approach to care changed over time as technological improvement, demographic changes, and political developments each exerted their pull. As Beckett writes, although "An estate was an inheritance, and consequently the current owner could not escape responsibility for its improvement, development and conservation[,] what this actually involved changed through time almost out of recognition" (*AiE* 136). Though they at least remained recognizable, stewards also underwent such changes, and the steward who at one point, for example, "formed an essential element of continuity in the administration of property" (Mingay 8) may have looked in surprise at "agents of a later generation" who "were apt to be sceptical of the beneficial results of the principle of continuity" (Spring 111). However, despite these differences, each stewarding manual strives to represent and to act as a true steward, one dedicated to an ethic of care, as it negotiates, with varying success, a reconciliation between rights and responsibilities, autonomy and relationship.

At approximately the same time Edward Laurence was penning his formative stewarding treatise, Alexander Pope was evidently preoccupied with the same problems Laurence's text seeks to redress. In 1728, he published a satire entitled *The History of the Norfolk Steward* that, as a work of fiction, suggests the overwhelming degree to which a steward's mediatory activities were seen as having moral implications for the community. Moreover, the discourse it creates about proper stewardship through its satirical criticism of "disengenuous stewards" (3) is redolent with the ethic of care. The "history" is written from the perspective of a tenant observing the injustices committed by one Mr. Lyn, a conniving steward, on the estate on which he lives.

The steward in Pope's satire is literally a central figure, not only on the estate, but in the surrounding community.[29] He is, for better or worse, positioned between the estate's tenants and their "benevolent" but absent master, Sir George, who, though he wants to make his tenants the "happiest and most easy of any People in our whole country" is, as was typical in the eighteenth century, frequently absent from his estate (2). Given these circumstances, the tenants do not communicate directly with their lord and are subject to misrepresentations by the steward (6). Furthermore, in an especially interesting passage, the steward's behavior is seen to have widespread effects on the local economy: "The yeomanry grumble for want of Money, the Manufacterers [sic] for want of Business, and the poor Labourers for want of Bread; and all impute their Misfortunes, I think, to Mr. Lyn," whose litigious tendencies are "preventing the usual Circulation of Money in Commerce by diverting it into other Channels" (17-18). This passage suggests

[29] This satire is generally believed to be targeting Robert Walpole, first Earl of Orford (1676-1745). Walpole was a Whig and is considered the first Prime Minister of Great Britain. Before attaining this honor, he held several important posts, including First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Leader of the House of Commons. Pope's use of a steward to stand in for a figure of such enormous political stature indicates how pervasive and applicable the ideology of stewardship was—it even informed the English people's expectations of their political leaders.

that the steward's role as mediator was seen to involve the satisfactory distribution of capital in the community.

However, it is the moral tone of Pope's work that is most interesting; the non-circulation of money is not merely a matter of smooth economic operations, but is significant only because of the people whom it starves, puts out of business, and subjects to indignities. In contrast to his master, who "loved his whole Species" and "did not think any Man was born for himself alone, nor could he bear to see any of his neighbouring Landlords use their Tenants ill, or rack them too high" (2), the steward is completely lacking in a sense of responsibility or desire to engage in activities that, as Gilligan writes, "make the social world safe, by avoiding isolation and preventing aggression" (43). In fact, his mediatory activities introduce conflict and dissolve social ties, leaving the tenants vulnerable and his master impoverished. For example, though he raises the tenants' rents to unaffordable levels, the steward spread rumors that the tenants were in danger of falling behind in their rents because they do not care about their duty to their master and do not respect him (Pope 7). In another example, the steward creates social distance and institutes capitalistic values through direct manipulation of land use:

> Sir George has a Park where his Tenants have Time out of Mind been permitted to recreate and refresh at leisure Hours, as often as they pleased; and thro' this Park many of them are oblig'd to pass every Day to their Grounds; Mr. Lyn […] order'd his own man to stand before the Park-Gate, and levy a Penny for the Passage of every Man, when Business or Diversions oblig'd him to pass that way. (9)

Actually obstructing the mediatory value of the land and landscape, the steward commodifies a geographical feature that once united the tenants and promoted social feeling, turning it into a site of individualistic jockeying for power and influence.

Pope therefore represents a world in which the perversion of the steward's mediatory position makes an ethic of care and the reconciliation between care for self and

care for others impossible to achieve. This irreconcilability is satirically represented in the steward's practices of embezzlement and nepotism, which are conducted "to support the Family, and other Self-Interests of Mr. Lyn" but "without consideration how much his Master was in debt, how detrimental it must prove to his Estate, or how ungrateful it was to the Tenants" (3-4). Through such deception, the steward also implies that the interests of the master and the interests of the tenants are irreconcilable, claiming that rent increases and other unjust measures are performed "in the Interest of our Landlord" (3). His excessive recourse to law further demonstrates his abandonment of care ethics as he (disingenuously) invokes rights-centered solutions that ostensibly protect Sir George but impoverish the community.

Pope's satirical condemnation of stewards who forsake their responsibility to support the interdependence of the landlord's prosperity and the tenants' and greater community's interests suggests that there was a general consensus in the eighteenth century about a steward's proper behavior and the demoralizing outcomes of failure to adhere to this standard. Edward Laurence's manual reflects this consensus while revealing how specific agricultural and social reforms complicated the steward's ability to reconcile the personal interests of the landlord with the landlord's responsibility to care for others.

Laurence's dedication of his manual to Catherine Darnley, Duchess of Buckingham and Normanby, begins to establish this inaugural stewarding manual's conception of the ideal steward. I have already suggested that the Duchess's assumption of responsibility for her husband's estate upon his death in 1721 established her as a steward. Indeed, according to Laurence, she is more capable than the "unjust Stewards" who were bringing the estate to ruin and from whom she apparently rescued the property (vi). However, like most women who found themselves in possession of or managing an

estate, the Duchess was merely an intermediary in a transfer of property that was ultimately designed to benefit not herself, but her son. Laurence emphasizes her role as a mediator by closing his dedication with a reference to the young Duke, praying "That Your Grace may long Live, and have the Pleasure of seeing the wise and noble Use the Duke of Buckingham, your Son, will make of all the Advantages you have procur'd him" (vii). Here, the Duchess clearly fulfills Hainsworth's definition of a steward as "an active manager whose business it was to improve his employer's property to the utmost" (8), accepting responsibility to care for something she herself does not own.

As a steward, the Duchess is associated with several virtues that would become the hallmark of good stewardship. Unlike Pope's conniving steward, who seeks his own profit to the extent of limiting his tenant's access to estate lands and to their master, the Duchess is full of "Candour," a quality that makes her a facilitator rather than an obstruction to positive feelings and productive relationships. Laurence writes that he appreciates her "Easiness of Access to Inferiors, which I have so often experienc'd, and which so naturally attracts Love and Admiration" (v). Furthermore, in contrast to the fickle stewards that she replaced, the Duchess is praised for her "Superior Judgment," "Good Sense," and especially for "an uncommon Sagacity in finding out Truth, and an unweary'd Application in the laying open and punishing Falsehood" (iv-v). These qualities, together with her "unusual Assiduity and Application to Business" (vi) are closely associated with what Laurence lauds as her "Prudent Care" (vii). Therefore, the Duchess's stewardship is defined by an unflagging and competent attention to practical duties, but also by an equally strong interest in ethical and moral duties.

Problematically, however, Laurence asserts that the moral aspect of the Duchess's care is primarily driven by an interest in justice, a male, rights-based approach to care that is, according to Gilligan, often at odds with more female, responsibility-based

approaches. The Duchess, with her "Humanity and Generosity" (v), could easily become the model for a type of stewardship that is able to reconcile the rights- and responsibility-based modes. However, Laurence deliberately creates a split between the aspects of the Duchess's stewardship that he deems manly and those that he finds ladylike. Her aptness in social relations requires no comment; women were expected to be able hostesses and to foster social connection. However, her other duties appear to set her apart from the typical gentlewoman. Laurence remarks that "few Ladies with such an unwearied Force and Resolution […] wou'd have had an Inclination to undertake" the business side of estate management (vi-vii). Laurence's dedication to her becomes a model for the tactics that he and subsequent writers of steward manuals relied on as they struggled to approach true stewardship.

Such strategies, especially in the context of this dedication, reveal that one of the primary obstacles to achieving a true ethic of care was gender and gender-based norms of behavior. As a social position, stewardship was particularly accommodating to and even epitomized by the propertied woman (see Introduction) and is therefore imbricated in a discourse that, as Gilligan's argument suggests, could be considered feminine. As the authors of stewarding texts attempt, as Laurence does, to construct a specifically male identity for the steward's labors, they reveal that the labor of the steward is difficult to gender, that the male and female spheres of labor are not so easy to separate. Laurence's very adulation of the Duchess reveals the seams in his construction of stewardship. By sending the seminal stewarding text into the world under the patronage of a woman who he holds up to the world as an ideal steward, Laurence is allowing women to embody the stewarding ethos. Indeed, Gilligan notes that women approach conflict with a "constant eye to maintaining relational order and connection" (xiv), making care activities more inherent in a female approach to problem-solving. By separating social prowess from

"business" sense, Laurence excludes male stewards from being able to participate in what he has compartmentalized as more feminine care duties, making it more difficult for the steward to engage in the essentially social tasks of fostering the interdependence that defines the ethic of care. The rift Laurence creates is traceable in part to the emerging sense of professionalism among stewards, and Laurence may be rhetorically protecting the steward's professional territory by drawing boundaries around some of its duties, a process of individuation and separation that Gilligan identifies as distinctly male (8). Nevertheless, this early foreclosure against the necessary commingling of men's and women's care efforts creates a tension inherited by the writers—including writers of nineteenth-century fiction—that followed Laurence. Stewardship itself becomes a mediatory position from which to negotiate gender. For men, a position of stewardship offers and opportunity to reformulate masculinity along more "caring" lines. For women, it provides an opportunity not only to exercise masculine power while remaining feminine, but also to appropriate stewardship for themselves and recreate true care ethics in the face of growing disinterest among professionals.

This tension riddles and problematizes Laurence's attempts to prescribe a mediator who is primarily concerned with relationship rather than rights. Complicating his task is the fact that one of the steward's primary preoccupations at the time was to manage estate enclosure, which had a profound effect on those who depended on the land for their livelihood. It was a reality that enclosure entailed economic suffering and, as it reshaped the landscape, drastically changed the ethos of local communities. The consolidation of estates to meet the demands of the new economy emphasized the efficiency of privatization over the potential of relationships. For example, though usually insignificant on the economic radar, the fruits of labor in the commoning culture were highly likely to be exchanged for the purposes of strengthening community ties

(Neeson 180). Neeson comments, "Waste gave [commoners] a variety of useful products, and the raw materials to make more. It also gave them the means of exchange with other commoners and so made them part of the network of exchange from which mutuality grew," fostered prominently by gifts and shared labor (158-159, 180, 181). The land, therefore, especially shared common land, became the matrix in which community members related to each other. The common was the site of year-round harvesting that brought the estate community together; both high and low participated in the local games and festivities that often grew up around traditional times for harvesting furze or picking berries (182). About the effect of such communal gatherings Neeson concludes, "All these occasions of contact, familiarity and exchange established some obligation, some connection on the basis of equality—a mutuality between landless commoners and everyone else. […] They met on common ground" (182).

The relationship of common land and its culture to enclosed farms was often expressed through changing dispositions toward the landscape of the estate and countryside. One commentator, George Bourne, "thought that a commoner's sense of well-being came from a sense of ownership and possession, a feeling of belonging, and an overwhelming localness. This was not the ownership of a few acres […] but the possession of a landscape" (qtd. in Neeson 179). Like the common fields and wastes, landscape was land to which all had access and from which no one was barred by arbitrary possession. Neeson tells us that "Critics of commons weighed the value of common right in terms of the market" (41), comparing the financial benefit of commoners' gleaning, grazing, or gathering practices against the benefits of privatization. As has already been discussed, however, the shared use of common lands also gave them an important social value, and many were led to lament the loss of a society based on

personal freedom, mutual aid, and fluid class relations as enclosure made small farmers "more differentiated, more specialized, more private" (257).

The steward's work, therefore, and the work of the earliest stewarding texts, was to manage enclosure and the landscape it produced in ways that honored the land-based mutuality that allowed estates to prosper. Enclosure was, after all, primarily an economic movement: in the eighteenth century, England was experiencing a labor supply problem, and practices like commoning kept a large number of the peasant class out of the labor force (Neeson 44). However, Neeson claims that neither side framed the enclosure debate in this way (44). Enclosers, for instance, sometimes "accused commoners of selfish individualism" that exerted itself to the detriment of the national good (44). Conversely, anti-enclosers observed that as lands were consolidated, "Landlords grew lazy, some 'little better than tyrants […] who when they had less wealth were more sensible of their dependence and connections, and could feel both for the poor and the public upon every emergency" (22). One encloser even agreed that the process would be "disagreeable and painful [to] the tender and feeling heart" (26) despite its advantages. These passages demonstrate that both sides of the debate relied on arguments that appeared to valorize the preservation of relationships and community-building and believed that their measures were more likely to achieve these ends. As debators sought to balance responsibility to self and others, they argued that "selfishness" and personal priorities caused community members to lose sight of their interdependence and made the community suffer.

These arguments, however, reflect how difficult it was to resolve the tension between the steward's ethic of care and his fulfillment of his duties to his lord and his country. Laurence's text illustrates how he approached the challenge posed by enclosure

to the nature of stewardship itself. As he discusses the ultimate necessity of enclosure, he advises,

> To alter Farms, and to turn several little ones into great ones, is a Work of Difficulty and Time: for it would raise too great an Odium to turn poor Families into the wide World, by uniting Farms all at once, in order to make an Advance of Rents: It is much more reasonable and popular to be content to stay till such Farms fall into Hand by Death, before the Tenant is either raised or turned out. (4)

This passage illustrates an attempt to mitigate the possible "painful" and alienating effects of enclosure through concessions that prioritize the preservation of the tenants' relationship with the steward and their well being and sense of security. This advice was evidently followed on enough occasions for Beckett to remark that "many landowners clearly went out of their way to establish a good rapport with their tenants" ("Landownership and Estate Management" 616). He notes elsewhere that tenants who had long resided on the estate were often retained even when new, more profitable tenants could be found. Beckett writes that this failure to always operate estates "on strictly commercial lines" nevertheless allowed owners "to realise among the agricultural population such a standard of moral and physical well-being as would have been unattainable by strict adherence to commercial lines of administration" (*AiE* 151). Sometimes, therefore, the tension between profit and sympathy was resolved by forgoing one to facilitate the other.

This policy was typically only followed for tenants who contributed to the estate's prosperity, however. Laurence later suggests that to protect the lord's interests, a steward should take the following course: "if he finds a Tenant, either thro' Ignorance or Indolence, not likely to thrive, or does not proceed in a due Course of Husbandry, that then he first admonish and instruct him; and if he proves stubborn and unpersuadable, afterwards to discharge him" (37). Rather than discarding such tenants as unprofitable

cogs in the machine of the estate, however, recognition of their humanity is preserved when Laurence tempers his advice with instructions "to get ride [sic] of them as soon as possible, always supposing that some Care be taken of their Families, in setting them to work in such ways which they better understand" (87). Therefore, even when the profit margin demanded that a tenant be expelled, a proper steward could make a tenant's removal beneficial for both the tenant and the estate.

Laurence was not always able to satisfy his readers, however, that the steward he constructed had adequately balanced responsibility to others with the lord's private interest. Citing Laurence's encouragement that stewards should seek out freeholders willing to sell and purchase their lands "at as reasonable a Price as may be for his Lord's Advantage and Convenience" (56-57), John Cowper retorts, "Is not this telling us, that a trusty Steward ought to be divested of all Humanity? That he must be zealous to take Advantage of the Weakness, the Misfortunes, the Distress, the Necessity of the poor Freeholders, that so he may purchase their Lands at a Price below their real Value, in order to promote the separate interest of his wealthy Lord?" (Cowper 17-18). Notably, Cowper's hypothetical questions seem to imply that such an attitude is antithetical to the nature of stewardship and ought to be answered in the negative. The stewardly characteristics he prescribes are more in line with the ethic of care: "Compassion and universal Benevolence" (18). For Cowper, this is but one of many passages in Laurence's text that instruct the steward to take measures that benefit the one at the expense of the many and reveal a forgetfulness of the interdependence of the estate community. He warns that "however Self-sufficient these Gentlemen may think themselves, they will inevitably find, that their Grandure cannot be supported without the Assistance of the Farmers and Cottagers" (11). To him, Laurence's presentation of acts of strict justice or

businesslike efficiency as acts of care was little but empty rhetorical maneuvering that failed to meliorate real suffering.

Indeed, Cowper, who claims in his tract to be a farmer, offers a perspective that, considering commoners' experiences with land enclosure, casts a different light on other passages in Laurence's text. For example, Laurence teaches that "A discreet and skilful management of Hedges is a considerable Article of a Steward's Care, because it tends […] to prevent gaps, and uneasy Trespasses of one Tenant upon one another" (71). The use of hedges as fences was being renewed at the height of enclosure. Such hedges had to be carefully cultivated to achieve the proper shape, density, and strength. However, the "protection" they offered from other inhabitants may not have been preferable to farmers who had experienced the pre-enclosure sociality of the open-field system. As Neeson writes, "Distances are shorter when fields are in strips. You can call from one to next. You can plough them and talk across the backs of the horses at the same time" (2). These traditional types of easy social relations were being threatened by barriers like hedges, and the fenced and divided landscape recommended by Laurence may not have been looked upon as an improvement. Rather than espousing a relational ethic, Laurence's hedges reflect what Gilligan describes as a preoccupation "with separation and […] with creating and maintaining boundaries between people" (xiv) to the extent that neighborly relations are looked upon suspiciously as "Trespasses." The hedges represent a rights-based approach to human relations that many locals reacted strongly against: enclosure-related riots often involved the destruction of fences, hedges, gates, walls and the materials used to build them (Neeson 277-279) as rioters protested their newly restricted access to land and their dispossession from the landscape.

Despite Laurence's failure to fully live up to the ethic of care, the content of his manual is nevertheless primarily concerned with tenants and steward-tenant interactions,

especially surveillance and educational activities. Subsequent manuals, though they address the social aspects of a steward's duty, devote an increasing proportion of pages to the technical aspects of the steward's work. This de-emphasis of care activities reflects both the steward's increasingly professional identity and the increasing importance of scientific agricultural improvements in a capitalistic system of agriculture. Nevertheless, all of the remaining stewarding texts acknowledge to some degree that the effectiveness of farming techniques depends on the character of the farmers and how well the steward educates and relates to them.

For example, Kent's *Hints*, though perhaps the most humane of all the texts when it discusses how fundamental human relationships are to the success of the estate, does not dedicate any chapters or sections exclusively to discussing people, with the exception of his final section, "Reflections on the Distress of the Poor." Rather, his manual begins with an "Incitement to the Study of Agriculture" and a discussion of the "Application of Soil to its right Use," and he considers the tenant-steward-lord relationship primarily in a section on the improvement of waste lands, which would indeed have had a significant effect on estate life. Similarly, Marshall devotes almost 400 pages to land valuing and agricultural methods before addressing topics, such as rents and leases, that may directly involve tenants. He does, however, continue to acknowledge that "Seeing the intimate connexion which necessarily subsists, between proprietors and occupiers […] how profitable it is to preserve good order upon an estate" (408-409), preserving the steward's role in mediating between profit and sympathy. Dean's text is also primarily a scientific treatise, though it opens with a chapter dedicated to tenant concerns. Though the gradual de-emphasis on traditional relationships is reflected in the very structure of these texts, they nevertheless attempt to create an ethic of care within this new focus that accommodates and eases the transition to an increasingly industrialized, capitalist society.

Marshall's manual offers an interesting case study of the way in which care ethics were used to justify changes in the economic and social landscape. In fact, the ideology purveyed by Marshall's text reflects a pattern of moral development that Gilligan considers necessary to achieving a true ethic of care. In her observations of women involved in a serious life decision, Gilligan noticed that the women initially struggled to limit their sense of responsibility to others: "Describing a life lived in response, guided by the perception of other's needs, they can see no way of exercising control without risking an assertion that seems selfish and hence morally dangerous" (143)—the assertion that the "interests of self can be legitimate" (149). In the process of counseling, however, the women begin to integrate care for self into their responsibility paradigm, constructing a response to their moral dilemma in which care for self becomes inseparable from care for others and even becomes a way to care for others. Threaded throughout Marshall's text is a discourse that not only personal sacrifice but also care for self contributes to the good of the estate and the nation.

Following a trend that became more prevalent in the later manuals, Marshall's text focuses on the community effects, local and especially national, of the steward's care activities. This emphasis stands in contrast to Laurence's and even Pope's earlier emphasis on the individual case and delimitation of care to the world of the estate and possibly the parish or a nearby village. Texts like Marshall's therefore reflect a societal shift that was expanding the steward's responsibilities and requiring stewards to reevaluate which levels or units of social relationship were most salient. Indeed, as social ties in the countryside became threatened by the commercialization of estate operations, the steward and those who embraced a stewarding role came under pressure to create a new realm in which loyalty, mutual obligation, and care could persist. As Gerard points out, "The Industrial revolution created alternative occupations with contractual

relationships between employer and employee, a more dynamic, fluid society" (242); aided by enclosure, the landed estate even contributed to the process through which the "cash nexus" threatened to become "the sole tie" (242).

There was an evident reaction to this trend from conservative quarters. Philip Pusey, an MP during the era of the first Reform Bill who became deeply interested in agricultural reform, wrote, "Our own recent [political] systems […] view man, we think too much as a mere individual. They cannot of course lose sight altogether of his social relations but they treat him as if he were capable of maintaining his own powers of mind by his own efforts of independent self-government" (qtd. in Spring 141). Marshall's manual attempts to resolve this problem by transferring the steward's care to a new, increasingly national venue. The commonfield system he regards as an ancient, even absurd relic in this new era of farming (132), distancing himself and his audience from the extremely local, communal lifestyle it represents. In fact, he even undermines the informal networks of mutual help that the shared use of land and landscape had facilitated, remarking that workers should be paid well enough so that they can save money against emergencies and avoid "being thrown under the debasing necessity of applying to their neighbors for relief" (155).

Policies like this promoted individualism and a distance between community members that came to be reflected in a landscape that was transformed as "the center of gravity of farming life moved from the nucleated village out onto isolated farmsteads" (Martins 35). Marshall's manual represents a changing disposition toward land and landscape that emphasized possession. "Property having no existence in the state of uncultivated nature, ranks among the most valuable inventions of the human mind" (1), he declares, indicating that civilization is not possible without the rules and regulations that define ownership. Marshall's view is overtly rights-based; in one solution proposed

to resolve problems between neighbors, he writes, "What I am here solicitous to inculcate is, that the remedy ought to be proportionate to the disease; and that this should be applied in such a manner as to not injure another" (225). Furthermore, though he imagines land as the basis for human social relations, he fails to imagine affective uses for land that lie outside of an economic paradigm: "Landed Property is the basis on which every other species of materials property rests: on it, alone, mankind can be said—to live, to move, and have their being" (1). Furthermore, he imagines that every aspect of land is subject to some aspect of possession or right (2). This is especially apparent in his discussion of purchasing property, in which every detail about of a piece of land is considered part of a code used to determine its value: the human labor put into it, the geography, its proximity to water or fertilizer, the humidity, the temperature, and even "appearances" (10) can be transmuted into cash through the agent's valuation.

The ethic of care, however, has not disappeared from Marshall's conception of land stewardship; it remains present in his discussions of how the land is to be used and developed, with his chief concern being that an estate be laid out for the public good. "In a general view of the lands of this kingdom, we find many, even of those that are appropriated, improperly applied" (149) he begins, going on to explain a proprietor's responsibility to cultivate his lands for the benefit of the national community. Referring to the planting of woods on ground that could be cultivated, he writes, "when carried to a certain extent, in a country that is unable to supply its inhabitants with food, [this practice] is a crime that might well be punishable" (150). In this passage, ownership of land does not necessarily give the owner the right to dispose of it as he pleases; rather, it gives the proprietor a responsibility to fulfill to others, turning ownership into a stewardship. This principle is also applied to recommend the creation of medium-sized

farms because, from such a layout, "the community receive the greatest proportion of the common necessaries of life" (154).

In addition to conceptualizing stewardship on a different scale, Marshall's text also suggests a new mode of stewardship that better accommodates a professional and masculine focus on creating profit in a competitive economy. This mode incorporates care for self into the ethic of care paradigm as a legitimate way to care for others. For example, he argues that land should be used to reach its optimal potential not just because the nation relies on the landowner to feed its growing population but because "in a suitable state of cultivation, [lands] might be worth twice their present value to their owners, and three times as much to the community" (149). Therefore, increasing one's own profit is inextricable from looking after the public good. In addition, Marshall suggests that the steward can help tenants make improvements on their property that will outlast their lease and eventually redound to the landlord's good: "There are numberless small favors which he can bestow upon them, without loss; and many with eventual advantage to the estate" (375). Furthermore, as the landlord sets about his own improvements, it behooves him to do so with the utmost care: "In carrying on a work, no requisite cost should be spared:—every thing ought to be done substantialy [sic], and in a workmanlike manner" (358). The beneficial effects of this self-care not only trickle down into the community, but into the future:

> His best policy is to take favorable opportunities of laying in good materials, at moderate prices […] and to employ good workmen, at fair wages; such as cannot furnish them with an excuse for being guilty of bad workmanship; such as will warrant their employer to urge, and enforce, that which is good. […] In pursuing this straight line of conduct, the pleasures, as well as the profits, of improvement are secured. Embarrassments are avoided. No half finished works are left […] as stumbling blocks to future improvers. (359)

In this passage, caring for oneself necessarily includes care for others—one can ensure sturdy craftsmanship and the longevity of one's projects by giving workers a wage that justifies close scrutiny and high standards. Indeed, caring for oneself is constructed as simultaneously caring for those who will eventually inherit, a classic manifestation of the steward's ethic of care. By modulating and refining the care inherent in stewarding duties, later steward manuals were able construct a stewardship that managed by limiting the steward's responsibilities while continuing to respond to the needs of the many communities he mediated.

Conclusion

The archive of steward literature reveals a complex, sometimes contradictory response to social change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as it attempts to synthesize profit and sympathy, progress and conservatism, professionalism and care. As it does so, it positions the steward at the juncture between pre-industrial culture and mercantilism, lord and tenant, country and city, holding him up as the mediator, as the creator of continuity between apparently discontinuous worlds and ways of life. Both stewards and their texts embody the actual, sometimes messy, coexistence of such spheres and lifestyles, a coexistence comprising relationships that, like the farm buildings so frequently discussed in the manuals, required the steward's constant attention, upkeep, and adaptation.

Stewards were a ubiquitous figure in English society for centuries, and the ethos of stewardship described in these texts—the steward's responsibility without possession—found a life beyond steward manuals. Whether used to capture a nostalgic longing for a medieval past or to articulate a capitalist model of paternalism, it was incorporated into Victorian ideologies in unique ways. For example, it is the spirit and

duties of stewardship that inform Mrs. Isabella Beeton's *The Book of Household Management* (1861). Her advice to housekeepers, for example, directly echoes Hainsworth's description of stewards as their masters' agents: "The housekeeper must consider herself as the immediate representative of her mistress, and bring, to the management of the household, all those qualities of honesty, industry, vigilance, in the same degree as if she were at the head of her own family" (Beeton 21). Mrs. Beeton applies the concept of possession and responsibility without ownership in the context of Victorian domesticity, emphasizing the very values upheld by the steward manuals. Her words of advice make the housekeeper, "as second in command in the house" (21) a mediator between mistress and servant, establishing within a middle-class, primarily urban context the structure of life on an aristocratic estate. Furthermore, both she and her mistress, who qualifies as a steward through her subjection to her husband, operate according to care principles. While the housekeeper should "see that every department is thoroughly attended to, and that the servants are comfortable, at the same time that their various duties are properly performed," the mistress's behavior should be governed by a similar rule: "If, also, a benevolent desire is shown to promote their comfort, at the same time that a steady performance of their duty is exacted, then their respect will not be unmingled with affection, and they will be still more solicitous to continue to deserve her favour" (7). Mrs. Beeton describes a world in which sustaining affective relationships becomes central to the order and efficiency of a well-run household and in doing so proposes a feminine, domestic, middle-class, urban sphere of stewardship that presumes on women's exercise of autonomy through a mode of care.

Mrs. Beeton's book demonstrates the diffusion of stewardship in textual purveyors of ideology beyond steward manuals. The chapters that follow will demonstrate how the figure of the steward and the concept of stewardship are also

adopted in literature in ways that reflect the characteristics and strategies of the stewards constructed by the manuals analyzed in this chapter. As each of these chapters identifies and describes the stewards in the Victorian texts they address, they will further explore the ways in which women came to adopt the position of steward as a mode of self-empowerment and how masculinity is complicated by this stance; how characters use landscape to access and express care; and discuss how care activities are used to mediate the social changes described in and shaped by the texts.

Chapter Two

Recreating Community: The Journey to Stewardship in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*

Political Reform, Germs, and Steel

The landscape of George Eliot's childhood was a landscape in transition. She was born on the farms of the Arbury Estate in Warwickshire, "the midmost county of England." In 1819, the year of her birth, this Midlands county exhibited a landscape "neither agricultural nor industrial, but a patchwork of both" (Hughes 6), as if mediating between the bucolic south and industrializing north.[30] The Arbury Estate itself exemplified the character of the region, combining centuries-old agricultural practices with modern industrial enterprise in its "7000 acres of mixed arable and dairy farmland, a coal-mine, a canal and […] miles of ancient deciduous forest, the remnants of Shakespeare's Arden" (1). Gazing on fields with names like "Engine Close" (7), Eliot matured in a landscape whose incongruities reflected a shift in English social relations from pre-industrial, localized agrarianism to capitalist individualism.

Like many Victorians, George Eliot was concerned about the ramifications of this shift, especially how it would affect the formation of the individual and that individual's ability to "live ethically in relation to others" (Weber 506). Raymond Williams describes the Victorian anxiety that industrialism was reducing human relations to market exchanges (e.g., xviii, 140), a process exemplified by the treatment of factory workers as almost as expendable as the cogs of the machines they worked among, worth only so many dollars or cents an hour. For thinkers like Eliot, this dehumanization was marked by the lack of a "coherent social faith and order" (*MM* prelude.3) that could structure and

[30] The contrasting landscapes—and therefore morals—of England's geographical north and south were evident well into the nineteenth century and inspired Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South* (1854-55).

give meaning to individual's lives and provide them with a sense of their responsibilities toward their fellow men. The disappearance of traditional village life was among the factors that threatened Victorians' already fragile sense of human fellowship (Graver 2).[31] To Eliot, such communities preserved practices and values that promoted sympathetic human connection and defied individualism: "communal celebrations, rural peacefulness and plenitude, kinship ties, dignifying work, love, and social sympathy, mutuality of obligation and concern" (100). It is therefore unsurprising that "George Eliot participated in a tradition of social thought that was preoccupied with the rediscovery of community" (3).[32] The challenge for writers like Eliot was to find a way "to integrate individualistic and communal values" (2), thereby creating a new type of community that could preserve loving human relations and make an ethical life available to the English as they navigated social transitions in an era of reform and social restructuring.

Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* creates a crucible in which to explore this search for community by situating the novel temporally in a historical moment of intense transition. The novel's action unfolds between 1829 and 1831, "when England," as Henry Staten puts it, "in the grip of economic crisis, trembled on the brink of the first great Reform Act" (991). The interweaving narratives of the text acknowledge not only the agitation excited by the Reform Act, but also the changes wrought by the incursion of the railroad and the medical reforms spurred by Victorians' increasing concerns about sanitation. Each of these movements resulted not only in changes in governance and actual physical practices but also initiated a paradigm shift in how the English conceived of themselves

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[31] Kevin Morrison corroborates, stating that even as early as the 1830s, "the provincial community increasingly made little sense as a framework for organizing individual and collective identities" ("Cultural Embeddedness" 318).

[32] Suzanne Graver cites Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, George Henry Lewes, David Friedrich Strauss, and Ludwig Feuerbach as among those whose work on social regeneration significantly influenced George Eliot.

and defined their relationship with others. Their presence in *Middlemarch* is therefore crucial to exploring how the elements of a community react under the pressure of external social change—and, once broken down, how such elements can be recombined.

The first reagent injected into the Middlemarch milieu is the debate over the Reform Bill. Known officially as the 1832 Representation of the People Act, the ratification of the Reform Bill marked the culmination of several years of political strategizing to reform the British electoral system. The reforms acknowledged significant economic and geographic changes in England that had been rendering the current parliamentary representation system increasingly irrelevant as the nineteenth century progressed: the growth of manufacture in England led to population movements and the concentration of potential voters (and new wealth) in industrializing cities that had hitherto been market towns or sleepy manorial townships. By the 1830s, the lack of representatives for wide swathes of the population and the overrepresentation of so-called rotten and pocket boroughs that had only a few, easily manipulated voters was seen as an abuse that prompted rioting in cities like Bristol and Nottingham (Roach 102). When the Act was finally passed in 1832, it almost doubled the number of eligible voters in England and Wales from 366,000 to 653,000 (Vanden Bossche 1) by redistributing parliamentary seats and broadening the franchise. Finlayson remarks that "of the one hundred and forty-three seats made available for redistribution by total or partial disenfranchisement, sixty-five were given to boroughs previously unrepresented" (14), most of which were in England's northern and midlands regions.

Overall, the changes wrought by the Reform Bill were far from revolutionary; as Vanden Bossche points out, "even after passage of the Act, four out of five adult males—and, of course, all women—did not have the right to vote" (1). Though politically its immediate effects were limited, Eliot clearly saw the 1832 Reform Bill as a watershed

moment in English history that enacted a shift in the way Englanders imagined themselves and their communities. "Within lives still vigorous" she wrote in the 1870s, "there have been changes such as the First Reform Bill […] which have given a keen experimental sense that public action is also a private affair" (Pinney 372). In other words, the principles that motivated the passing of the Bill inspired a sense of personal responsibility for social change that led individuals to see such change as a matter of personal action. This sense of personal efficacy also implies a feeling of ownership, and the belief that public affairs had relevance to them also caused individuals to sense that they were part of a larger community than their imaginations had previously encompassed.

The Reform Bill therefore gave rise to a new realization of interconnectedness and social embeddedness even as it increasingly legitimized individualism. Noting how the Bill democratized social relations, Morris writes that in the years following the Bill, the "almost unquestioned acceptance of social hierarchy" gave way to "a general perception that…society would have to be ordered upon principles of inclusion" (3). Therefore, "The contemporaneous discourse on citizenship stressed individuality and self-cultivation" ("Cultural Embeddedness" 323) as well as the idea that each individual shared membership in a larger social body. The inkling of national belonging awakened by the Reform Bill worked in tandem with other national developments to erode citizens' local identities.

The Reform Bill's redefinition of citizenship, for example, was echoed by the increasing mobility offered by the construction of the railroad. Kevin A. Morrison points out that the Reform Act, by enfranchising those who were not landed gentry, expanded "the definition of what counted as property […] from fixed to portable" ("Mother Tongue" 83), allowing cash and other forms of non-fixed capital to invest citizens with

political power. The legitimization of portable property rendered those who possessed it national subjects, dissociated from a specific place or landscape. Developments like the railroad encouraged this newly legitimized mobility both by disrupting landscape and reconfiguring the relationship between identity and locale. "With the death of distance came the death of geographical security and identity guarantees," writes Elizabeth Bleicher (84) of the railway's ramifications, resulting in "social, political, psychological, economic, and demographic effects that permeated and reconfigured Victorian culture" (86). Though, like the Reform Act, "trains were poised to become a major agent of social democratization" (103), increased personal mobility did not "make for a greater sense of community" (87). Despite increased connectivity, the railroad had the potential to make inaccessible the very resources that had historically been used to form affective ties.

Morrison discusses Eliot's attitude toward these resources in his study of *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). He remarks on Eliot's preoccupation with the "home-scene," or the "landscape, physical buildings, and set of relations located in the circumscribed geographic setting of one's birth" ("Cultural Embeddedness" 332 n4) that, to Eliot, become "constitutive of the self" ("Mother Tongue" 87). An oft-quoted passage from Daniel Deronda (1876) expresses this philosophy of the home-scene: "A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth […] a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbors may spread" (50). This sentiment highlights the importance of the fixity of land and landscape not only to the development of a sense of self, but to the sense of interdependence that enriches a life of feeling. As Morrison writes, in Eliot's fiction "Landscape and human relations become metonyms for each other—the landscape standing for familial and social obligations and affections, and familial and social

obligations and affections standing for the particular geographic locality of one's home-scene" ("Mother Tongue" 89). However, as the railroad grew from "a disparate group of small local railways that did not intersect and only serviced a handful of main routes and pockets around the country" (Bleicher 100) to an extensive network of lines, fixity became outdated, and rootedness and attachment became tenuous propositions.

Though the railroad therefore emphasized interconnectedness while undermining closeness, perhaps the reality of this interconnectedness was brought home to Victorians by their experience with disease. The spread of illnesses like cholera, which Eliot alludes to in *Middlemarch*, led the British to consider such interconnectedness dangerous. As Lillian Furst indicates, cholera had never been endemic to the British Isles but became a major public health concern after spreading from East Asia through Eastern and Central Europe before reaching England by ship from Hamburg, Germany in 1831 (354). Local lives were therefore endangered by a global network of transportation, making distance rather than closeness more desirable. In instituting medical reforms to address the spread of such diseases, the unprecedented magnitude of the problem impressed the English with a need for public control (Roach 96) and national standards and regulations (226). Responding to these problems therefore required a relinquishment of local control over sanitary measures and a recognition of national authority. George Eliot commented on the apparent effects of such policies on the minds of the English: "And there is the better understanding of disease which makes obedience to general sanitary measures a double education in the ideas of continuity and solidarity" (Pinney 372). Again emphasizing the developing relationship between individual self-regulation and responsibility toward a group, this quotation suggests that medical reform was fertile ground in which Eliot could observe and describe the changes to conceptions of self and community that England experienced in 1832 and find a way to reintegrate individual and communal values.

To make this reintegration possible, Eliot needed a feasible model of care ethics that members of her society could relate to, a figure who was positioned to navigate social transitions but preserve affective ties that both acknowledged and transcended self. Such a figure was ready at hand in the person of the estate steward. As they became professionalized, stewards—or land agents, as stewards were beginning to be called—represented both fixed property and the portable property (and therefore the mobility) enfranchised by the Reform Act, making them quintessential transitional figures. Eliot had become intimately familiar with the steward's typical duties through her father, Robert Evans. Describing a figure who encompasses both the old agrarianism and the burgeoning industrialism that informed the landscape of her childhood, she recalls, "He had large knowledge of building, of mines, of plantation, of various branches of valuation and measurement—of all that is essential to the management of large estates" (Hughes 14). It was also through her father that Eliot became personally acquainted with the complexity of managing rural social relations in a time of transition (see Chapter 1).

Robert Evans had been brought to the Arbury Estate in 1806 as its steward (1). Evans and his brothers had worked for Francis Parker on his Derbyshire estate before Parker inherited Arbury and took the name Newdigate. Robert Evans had evidently made himself indispensable to the landowner through his skillful management, and around the time of Eliot's birth, Evans was rewarded with 280 acres of personal farmland on the estate, which was attached to Griff House, where Eliot grew up (Hughes 12). With its "handsome Georgian facade, a steep slate roof, and well-proportioned windows" looking out over a wide lawn (Mead par. 1), the house is evidence of the Evans family's respectable position and an acknowledgement of the father's contribution to the prosperity of the estate. Indeed, Evans was known for his "meticulous bookkeeping and surveying skills" (Hughes 13) and as an "excellent draughtsman" (14). His duties

required him to be knowledgeable about both agriculture and management of industrial enterprises; coal-mining was a lucrative pursuit on the estate.

As he gained a "reputation as the cleverest agent in the area" (12), Evans's position on the estate began to change. He was among the generation of stewards undergoing the transition to professional land agents. Eliot biographer Kathryn Hughes indicates that the power of the feudal system of patronage to shape Evans's identity was weakening: "Evans came to be seen less as a clever servant of the Newdigates and increasingly as a professional man in his own right" (14) as he began to be employed by other local landowners (14) and was even sought after by public institutions (13). For example, "in a blend of self-interest and social responsibility" (13), he offered his services to churches and other charitable institutions, though he charged them fees, in keeping with his status as an independent, professional man. In this way, he was able to preserve an element of care even in professional capacities that typically favored an increase in social distance. Indeed, Evans's financial and managerial capabilities combined with his skill in managing social relations to make him, apparently, an ideal steward. Unlike other agents, whose roles became increasingly specialized, Eliot described her father as

> a man whose extensive knowledge in very varied practical departments made his services valued through several counties. […] He was held by those competent judges as unique amongst land agents for his manifold knowledge and experience, which enabled him to save the special fees usually paid by landowners for special opinions on the different questions incident to the proprietorship of land. (14-15)

It was also from her father that Eliot would have learned about both the steward's growing sphere of influence as a mediator of social change and the role of care ethics in the steward's daily practices. She would have observed him in roles such as educator as he personally dispensed agricultural and scientific treatises to his tenants (349 n20) and

political agent as he represented the Newdigate family at local meetings and drummed up votes for them during elections (15). She would also have noticed the ways in which he handled estate affairs not only with an eye toward profit but also with concern for the tenants' welfare. For example, in 1834, he lobbied his employers for a refund on the rents to assist the tenants as they struggled to survive an unprofitable wheat harvest (14). This example of (successful) mediation between tenant and landlord indicates an attitude that considers sympathy an asset to estate management and views estate life as a network of mutual responsibilities. Thus, Eliot's father modeled for the author a mediating route between profit and sympathy, individual and group and suggested an ethical way to navigate the changes reshaping the rural landscape. Hughes theorizes that "Looking at the world through her father's expert eyes, [Eliot] learned to see that these two strands of life were not conflicting, but that they represented a particular moment in the development of English life. The rural community had not been destroyed, but it was being radically regeared" (9). It is with the eyes of a steward that she later narrated social transitions in many of her novels, including her Midlands epic, *Middlemarch*.

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* narrates the struggle to reconcile individualistic and communal values during what was, at the time of the novel's writing, a moment of transition forty years in the past that still resonated intensely in the present with the recent passage of the Reform Act of 1867. In this chapter, I examine how Eliot deploys the figure of the steward in the search for a way to mediate the economic shift from fixed to portable property and reconcile the uneasy relationship between individualistic and inclusive ideologies in an ethical way that preserves the sympathies essential to community life. Many Eliot scholars have been preoccupied with the author's own preoccupation with ethics and the "ethical models" she used to "offer innovative depictions of community and human interaction" (Marks 25). Her relational ethics have

been most persuasively described as representationally encapsulated in the marriage bond. As Weber argues, to Eliot, the "individual's agency has a social horizon, […] the subjective life has its origins and its destination in significant ways in the intersubjective context. […] Clarity of self-definition depends upon contact with others; […] the 'I' depends upon exchange with "Thou" (500). For Weber, this contextual subjectivity formation is best observed in Eliot's literary marriages, in the choices made by characters over time within the "continuity of married companionship" (501). However, viewing Eliot's interest in reconciling agency and relationship through the work of her texts' stewards allows Weber's observations to be applied to increasingly larger community and narrative scales, integrating "the centrality of relatedness to Eliot's conception of subjectivity" into discussions of Eliot's larger social and historical concerns with local and national community formation (see, e.g., Graver). In what follows, I first describe the town of Middlemarch and its surroundings to establish the local ethos, especially the town's disposition to change. I focus on the factors limiting the town's ability to support relationships of care while undergoing the transitions being imposed upon it by the Reform Act, the railroad, and medical reforms. I then analyze Eliot's treatment of each of the transitionary forces affecting Middlemarch by discussing how she uses three potential stewards—Tertius Lydgate, Dorothea Brooke, and Fred Vincy—to explore ways to reinstate relationships of mutual obligation and care at various levels, both local and national.

Lydgate's failure to fully recognize the interdependence of self and other results in the failure of his care project as a medical reformer but also points to broader problems created by the failure to integrate national and local as well as new and old forms of property. Resolutions to these problems are proposed through Dorothea Brooke and Fred Vincy. These two steward figures operate within the ethic of care paradigm to enact a

reconciliation between individuality and inclusivity but whose differing trajectories within that paradigm, governed by the gender norms that create differential relationships with property, lead to two different models of that reconciliation. Specifically, Fred's need to learn how to take responsibility results in his rejection of the selfish extremes of landownership and mercantilism represented by Mr. Featherstone and his father, respectively, and his assumption of a professional status that allows him to model a balance between the two. In doing so, he models how men can participate in affective community-building, using the position as steward to broaden masculine gender norms that typically uphold instead the more individualistic, competitive values that eschew a life of care. Dorothea's position as a woman, in contrast, causes her to take a more abstract approach to property as a medium through which to strengthen relationships and affective communal ties. In a developmental trajectory opposite that of Fred's, however, Dorothea must learn how to limit her sense of responsibility towards others to achieve a true ethic of care. As she does so, she recognizes the concrete limitations of fixed property in achieving a reconciliation between individual and group interests. Fred's narrative, therefore, suggests how local life can be possible within a newly mobile economic system, while Dorothea's development emphasizes the creation of a more inclusive national vision that values the local. Finally, I discuss how Eliot's efforts to communicate care values to her readers position her and her novel as a steward creating, through the shared experience of literary consumption, the ideal community.

The "petty medium" of Middlemarch

Middlemarch is provincial town in the Midlands redolent with the signs of change and transition inherent in its position in England's geographical center. Eliot describes these changes as a "subtle movement" (*MM* I.xi.88) redefining social relations though

political and ecclesiastical "currents," shifts in financial practices, and an influx of newcomers (I.xi.88). These "less marked vicissitudes" are, at the moment of the narrative, spinning "fresh threads of connection" between social classes, between Middlemarch and its outlying parishes, and between old residents and strangers, "begetting new consciousness of interdependence" (I.xi.88). This sense of interdependence, however, is more often a frightened realization of increasing and more complex associations than the creation of a true community. The town of Middlemarch forms the nucleus in a constellation of several outlying communities organized around fixed property holdings, including Lowick parish and Tipton parish. Just miles from each other and from Middlemarch, Tipton parish encompasses the neighboring estates of Tipton Grange and Freshitt Hall; Lowick parish contains Lowick Manor and Stone Court, Lowick village, and a hamlet called Frick, whose residents work in a local quarry. Eliot notes that over the years, the town of Middlemarch has spread, and areas that were once relatively rural are "now surrounded with the private gardens of the townsmen" (III.xxiv.227). However, increased proximity has not necessarily resulted in more neighborly relations, as this description indicates. Reminiscent of enclosure, the townsmen carefully demarcate their private property, reflecting the encroachment of individualistic values on the countryside.

The influence of such values in Middlemarch[33] restricts the social mobility described by the narrator and renders harmful what little social mobility it allows. Dorothea, for example, feels that her ensconcement in "the still, white enclosure" (III.xxviii.257) in which her property physically and psychologically engrosses her limits

[33] In this chapter, Middlemarch is often used to refer to the town and the outlying parishes in which many of the characters live. Though the residents of these parishes would not identify themselves as Middlemarchers and belong to their own distinct communities, they are designated using that demonym for the sake of simplicity. Distinctions are made when such are significant to the analysis.

her sympathetic impulses and is a significant obstacle in her quest to create affective community. Her discomfort with the distance her property creates is explained by the narrator: "The country gentry of old time lived in a rarefied social air: dotted apart on their stations up the mountain they looked down with imperfect discrimination on the belts of thicker life below." To Dorothea, this position is "chill[y]," bereft of the warming closeness of human love and sympathy (IV.xxxiv.306), but she struggles to know how to dispose of her property in a way that will close the great divide. Aptly called "fixed" property, real estate and the exclusivity inherent in land ownership are, to Dorothea, paralyzing.

In most cases, ownership of fixed property only increases social and even geographical distance in *Middlemarch*. The owner of Tipton Grange, for example, is confronted by his limitations when he addresses his potential constituency, most of whom are town dwellers: "The weavers and tanners of Middlemarch […] had never thought of Mr. Brooke as a neighbor, and were not more attached to him than if he had been sent in a box from London," the narrator comments as a hostile crowd gathers to hear Mr. Brooke's hustings speech. It is not only Mr. Brooke's status as a landlord that alienates him from Middlemarch voters, it is his irresponsible approach to property. Attacked by his opponents for being "a damned bad landlord" (IV.xxxvii.336), he charges his tenants rack-rent[34] but does nothing to maintain the buildings and gates on his estate, which are virtually in ruin (IV.xxxviii.359-360). In other words, Mr. Brooke, who, significantly, manages his own property, has compromised his effectiveness as a Reform leader and a mediator of social change because he is a poor steward. His failure to recognize the interdependence and shared interests of himself, his tenants, and the townspeople and to

[34] The highest rent possible based on an evaluation of the land's value and projected productivity. Such a rent was considered excessive.

respond with an attitude of care make the increasing proximity of the parish and town, gentry and commoner, nearly meaningless for many inhabitants. The narrator observes that Mr. Brooke's tenant Mr. Dagley benefits little from "having a rector […] who was a gentleman to the backbone, a curate nearer at hand who preached more learnedly than the rector, a landlord who had gone into everything […] and all the lights of Middlemarch only three miles off" (IV.xl.373). Rather than feeling his horizons widened by these neighbors, Dagley feels "that there was no earthly 'beyond' open to him" (IV.xl.373), a hopelessness incurred because of Mr. Brooke's failure to look after his own interests with an eye towards the good of those for whom he is responsible. Without a caring mediator, social transitions, specifically the Reform, become a weapon in Dagley's hands. He threatens his landlord, "An' you may do as you like now, for I'm none afeared on you. An' you better let my boy aloan, an' look to yoursen, afore the Rinform has got upo' your back" (IV.xl.373). Mr. Brooke's bad management demonstrates that it is a lack of proper stewardship that compromises Middlemarch's ability to adjust to inevitable social changes without generating harm or even violence.

Greater physical mobility, though as inevitable as the Reform, poses a similar threat of both physical and psychological harm to Middlemarch in the absence of a caring mediator. That Middlemarchers feel the vulnerability of their identity in the face of this new mobility is demonstrated by their deep suspicion of strangers. "The unreformed provincial mind distrusted London" (VI.lxi.576), the narrator remarks, with some residents even retaining an idea "of London as a centre of hostility to the country" (VI.lvi.521). This insular attitude is not limited to the nation's capital. Speaking of Lydgate's suspected engagement to Rosamond Vincy, Mrs. Plymdale sniffs that she "was not fond of strangers coming into a town" (III.xxxi.276), and both Rosamond's and her aunt Harriet Bulstrode's misfortunes are later attributed to their having married strangers

to Middlemarch (VIII.lxxiv.699). It is clear, moreover, that Rosamond's husband Lydgate's failure to establish a successful medical practice is in part due to do the prejudice against him as an interloper, the general opinion being that he "ought to have kept among the French" (VIII.lxxiv.702). However, this suspicion is not only damaging to Lydgate's psyche and his ability to do real good in the world, but proves physically dangerous for those who criticize him. He grates against the "petty medium" (II.xviii.175) of Middlemarch, perfectly represented in the person of his ignorant, self-satisfied wife, Rosamond, who not only does not understand but actively obstructs his scientific work with her trivial cares and inflexibility. The compromises he must make to her willfulness destroy love, hope, and true marital sympathy just as the petty demands of Middlemarch society lead him to compromise his commitment to the greater good and thrust him into a self-serving future. In his own words, "I must do as other men do, and think what will please the world and bring in money […]—that is the sort of shell I must creep into and try to keep my soul alive in" (VIII.lxxvi.723). Middlemarch's inability to sustain a community capable of integrating the individual leads to this vision of a life without care but also threatens the community's safety. Their rejection of Lydgate and his foreign medical practices leave the entire town susceptible to the cholera epidemic. The New Fever Hospital, which is run on the cutting-edge medical principles Lydgate learned abroad, must be abandoned by him at the very moment the first cholera case is identified in Middlemarch (VII.lxxi.681-683). The mobility that the town feared did indeed bring danger right to their doorsteps, but its internal failure to accommodate that mobility makes the moment of transition represented by the arrival of the cholera potentially deadly.

Middlemarch's resistance to adjusting their localized, insular perspective to accommodate the acceleration of physical mobility is especially apparent as they narrow-

mindedly discuss the construction of a rail line through Lowick parish, in which their sense of community is revealed to be clearly limited to the boundaries of their own parish. The railroad is threatening to the locals not only because it heralds the arrival of strangers but because it disrupts landscape, which they still use as a medium through which they develop and maintain individual and group identity. Lowick's inhabitants, for instance, abhor the thought of a railroad because the land they fear it will disrupt has "not only measurable but sentimental" value (VI.lvi.519). The significance of this sentimental value is demonstrated in a passage describing Fred and Rosamond Vincy's morning ride toward Stone Court. As they travel, the changing landscape they pass through is legible to them:

> Little details gave each field a particular physiognomy, dear to the eyes that have looked on them from childhood: the pool in the corner where the grasses were dank and trees leaned whisperingly; the great oak shadowing a bare place in mid-pasture; the high bank where the ash-trees grew; the sudden slope of the old marl-pit making a red background for the burdock; the huddled roofs and ricks of the homestead without a traceable way of approach; the gray gate and fences against the depths of the bordering wood; and the stray hovel, its old, old thatch full of mossy hills and valleys with wondrous modulations of light and shadow such as we travel far to see in later life, and see larger, but not more beautiful. These are the things that make the gamut of joy in landscape to midland-bred souls—the things they toddled among, or perhaps learned by heart standing between their father's knees while he drove leisurely. (I.xii.96)

Sharing their kinship to this particular land and landscape, locals who pass through such scenes encounter a unanimous upwelling of feeling that sets them apart and defines them as midlands-dwellers and is nearly inextricable from their own sense of self. The destruction or reorganization of such a landscape will inevitably erode a community based on such an unstable foundation. As the passage indicates, if similar effects are sought elsewhere, no other landscape would have the power to recreate the same social feeling within the midlands native.

The landscape's capacity to represent community belonging is accompanied by the implication that strangers to the landscape may not be inspired by the same sense of fellowship. As Miranda Joseph reminds us, "community concerns boundaries between us and them that are naturalized through reference to place" (58). For example, Mr. Featherstone's illegitimate son Joshua Rigg reserves no sentimental value for the land he inherits at Stone Court, unmoved by the very landscape that was so expressive to Fred and Rosamond. The other legatees and Mr. Featherstone himself believed that "Mr. Rigg Featherstone would have clung to it as the Garden of Eden" (V.liii.488), a metaphor befitting the provincial natives' experience of land as a medium for creating a self. Rigg, however, "looked at Stone Court and thought of buying gold" (V.liii.488); his true desire is to transmute Stone Court into a more portable form of property and set up a money-changer's shop on the North Quay (V.liii.488-489). In Rigg's hands, the land is stripped of affective value and becomes a token of exchange that he can turn into cash just as his lending business will turn money into more money. The disposability of the land to Rigg stands as a warning to the old inhabitants of the increasing insufficiency of fixed property—and therefore landscape—to support the affective bonds necessary for community in an increasingly mobile cash-based economy in which everything can be reduced to its exchange value. Joseph confirms, "capital is global and faceless. […] Capital [in contrast to community] would seem to denature, crossing all borders, and making everything and everyone equivalent" (58). This illegibility of the Midlands landscape to newcomers like Rigg indicates the growing need to find a new way to foster community and establish relationships of care.

It is little wonder, then, that the effects of the railroad construction are imagined to be nothing short of shattering,[35] and all of the locals agree that the project will "injure mankind" (VI.lvi.519). This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as the locals, in their resistance to change, both cause and incur harm on themselves. Seeing the railroad as destructive, the parishioners' solution is not to mitigate the harm through acts of care but simply to relocate it. Solomon Featherstone argues, "The best way would be to say nothing, and set somebody on to send 'em away with a flea in their ear, when they came spying and measuring. […] Let 'em go cutting in another parish" (VI.lvi.520). The extremely limited conception of community reflected in this resolution, which does not even include neighboring parishes in its scope, renders ostensible acts of care little more than selfish self-preservation as the laborers in Lowick parish are stirred up to violence against the railroad agents, injuring men and destroying property (VI.lvi.522-523).

Such short-sightedness is dangerous for Middlemarchers because of the inevitability of the changes they hope to defer, especially if these changes are indeed potentially harmful. As Caleb Garth warns, an inability to accommodate change will redound upon the uncompromising locals: "Now, my lads, you can't hinder the railroad: it will be made whether you like it or not. And if you go fighting against it, you'll get yourselves into trouble" (VI.lvi.525). However, Middlemarchers are nearly blind to their membership in and complete helplessness against the larger, more influential forces that are shaping their lives. The narrator comments that "This reasoning of Mr. Solomon's was perhaps less thorough than he imagined, his cunning bearing about the same relation to the course of railways as the cunning of a diplomatist bears to the general chill or catarrh of the solar system" (VI.lvi.520). This cheeky exposure of Solomon's misguided

[35] Mrs. Waule envisions that the railways will "blow you to pieces right and left" (VI.lvi.520).

self-importance reflects Middlemarch's local tunnel vision. In its parochial egoism, Middlemarch fails to see that the railroad, with its promise of increased mobility and larger, more complex networks of connection, is a sign of national influences that may indeed fracture their lives with individualizing, democratizing forces.

With such a prospect of harm, there is clearly a need for Middlemarchers to discover ways to care for those who may be affected by major disruptions of their lives and livelihoods by the Reform Act, the spread of disease and the attendant medical reforms, and the inroads made by the railways. Middlemarch, in other words, needs a steward, a mediating figure that can help the provincial town participate in these inevitable transitions by curbing its self-destructive resistance and modeling how individual and communal interests can coexist and be integrated in a way that allows not only proximity but the development and maintenance of affective relations supported by an ethic of care. The next three sections analyze three steward figures used by Eliot to explore the possibilities of the ethic of care paradigm in navigating each of the major transitions approaching Middlemarch.

The Young Surgeon

Lillian R. Furst states that "the medical strand was clearly an integral part of [*Middlemarch*'s] underlying theme of reform and transition" (342). Deliberately establishing its intention to document the state of medicine in 1829 as a state of change, the narrator introduces the subject from a perspective of completed change: when the reader is first introduced to Tertius Lydgate, "the heroic times of copious bleeding and blistering had not yet departed, still less the times of thoroughgoing theory" (*MM* II.xv.133). Poised to mediate the evidently inevitable transition into a new medical era, Lydgate is a twenty-seven-year-old newcomer to Middlemarch who is acknowledged

even by that town's xenophobic residents to be "not altogether a common country doctor" (II.xv.133). This impression is generated by Lydgate's determination to be a catalyst of change, his possession of qualities that position him, through the providential arrangement of the events of medical history, as a steward.

Lydgate's suitability to act as a mediator of social change is first signaled by his professional and social liminality. He comes from a family with good connections but is himself poor, having been orphaned as a lad (II.xv.133). He therefore has the manners, dress, and tastes of a gentleman but the education and financial standing of a professional man. Just as he straddles class divides, his status within his own profession crosses long-established boundaries. In the late 1820s, medical practitioners were undergoing a process of professionalization similar to that transforming the steward into a land agent. Activists like Thomas Wakley, the founder of the prestigious medical journal The Lancet, "fought for a totally new conception of a unified and self-governing profession," seeking "both to introduce more scientific methods into diagnosis and treatment, and to revise the structure of the profession" (Furst 342). It is within this context that Lydgate resolves to "settle in some provincial town as a general practitioner, and resist the irrational severance between medical and surgical knowledge in the interest of his own scientific pursuits, as well as of the general advance" (*MM* II.xv.136). Though often called a "surgeon" in the novel, Lydgate's self-identification as a general practitioner[36] here is significant. The general practitioner represented a reconciliation between the head and the

[36] A general practitioner was essentially a surgeon who practiced both medicine and surgery, "whether dually licensed or not" (Furst 343 n6). Both shared the same anomalous position of being "poised precariously […] midway between the physicians and the apothecaries" (Furst 343). Furst writes that even after the Royal College of Surgeons was granted a charter in 1800, "the functions and status of surgeons remained ambiguous, still smacking of trade on account of the use of hands and the dispensing of drugs, though by no means confined to the craftsmanship of the knife" (343). It is this anomalous position that likely made surgeons, in their quest to legitimately practice medicine, the greatest agitators for medical reform.

hands of medical practice, the separation of which was institutionalized in the strictly segregated duties of physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries. Legally, physicians were highly-paid consultants who advised on "inward" ailments, while surgeons were restricted to treating "outward" ailments; apothecaries, on the lowest rung of the profession, dispensed and administered drugs (Furst 343-344). Lydgate's practice of medicine involves activities, such as a refusal to dispense medicine and the consultation of a patient with a heart ailment, that disrupt this traditional, hierarchical structure, which he believes preserves the reputations and easy lifestyles of the few at the cost of slowing the advancement of medical knowledge and, in turn, endangering lives.

To Lydgate, reform of the structure of the medical profession is an intellectual necessity that becomes an act of care as the fruit of curiosity is turned to the alleviation of human suffering. His pursuit of a medical career is borne of the conviction that the medical profession "present[ed] the most perfect interchange between science and art; offering the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good" (II.xv.136). The practice of medicine is, in other words, the perfect expression of an ethic of care, uniting the desire to take responsibility for others with the satisfaction of personal fulfillment. Moreover, medicine allows Lydgate to produce this "social good" on an intimate scale. Lydgate, after all, "is an emotional creature, with a flesh-and-blood sense of fellowship which withstood all the abstractions of special study. He cared not only for 'cases,' but for John and Elizabeth" (II.xv.136). Therefore, rather than distancing the professional from the affective life, the medical reforms that interest Lydgate can leverage intellectual activity to guide large-scale transitions according to an ethic of care, without losing sight of—and, in fact, reinforcing—meaningful social relationships. While instituting more scientific practices and making theoretical discoveries, the ambitious young doctor "meant to be a unit who would make a certain amount of difference

towards that spreading change which could one day tell appreciably upon the average, and in the mean time have the pleasure of making an advantageous difference to the viscera of his own patients" (II.xv.137).[37] As a potential steward, Lydgate does not prioritize personal financial success or intellectual exclusivity. Rather, within his domain, his stance is apparently similar to that of the steward's ownership without possession, a balance between personal interest and personal responsibility.

Representing in his aspirations, therefore, the apex of development in the ethic of care described by Carol Gilligan, it is also interesting to note how closely Lydgate's vision of a healthy, (medically) reformed community accords with Gilligan's description of the social vision of those who live by care ethics. The women that Gilligan studied valued a "nonhierarchical vision of human connection" (62). She explains, "Since relationships, when cast in the image of hierarchy, appear inherently unstable and morally problematic, their transportation into the image of web changes an order of inequality into a structure of interconnection" (62). The priority in a community based on care is to keep relationships safe, which in turn protects individuals whose identities have been established relationally.

The image of the web conjured by Gilligan recurs, as Gillian Beer has pointed out, throughout *Middlemarch* as Eliot explores relationship, affinity, and the possibility of unity. Lydgate participates in this language of the web, and not just in his pursuit of the "primary webs or tissues" that compose all life (II.xv.138). Rather, he constructs a non-hierarchical vision on a larger scale: "A fine fever hospital in addition to the old infirmary might be the nucleus of a medical school here, when once we get our medical reforms," he reflects, "and what would do more for medical education than the spread of

[37] Lydgate's own description of his feelings is less distant than that of the narrator's. He muses to himself, "I should have never been happy in any profession that did not call forth the highest intellectual strain, and yet keep me in good warm contact with my neighbors" (II.xvi.155).

such schools over the country? A born provincial man who has a grain of public spirit as well as a few ideas, should do what he can to resist the rush of everything that is a little better than common towards London" (II.xiii.116). Lydgate is proposing that the health of individuals and of individual towns across England can only be safeguarded by developing and strengthening relationships between towns and resisting the hierarchical vision of knowledge being mediated to a periphery from the "center"—London. To him, London represents all the values that stultify change or make it a threat to community, despising what he describes as the "empty bigwiggism, and obstructive trickery" (II.xvii.163), the "intrigues, jealousies, and social truckling" (II.xv.136) of the London medical community. Such competitiveness and egoistical aims run counter to his inclusive ideal and explain his retreat to the provinces, where he believes that his local mediating activities will not be absorbed by London but will be allowed to promote the public good through establishing a more inclusive community based on a beneficial mobility.

Though medical reforms may have given Lydgate the perfect vehicle for becoming the next Jenner (II.xv.136), what he becomes instead is a physician "with an excellent practice, alternating, according to the season, between London and a Continental bathing-place" (VIII.finale.781), the type of "puffed" practitioner he despises (VIII.lxxvi.723). Though the factors that lead to this disappointing outcome are in part attributable to the recalcitrance of Middlemarch, as discussed in the previous section, Lydgate himself fails to develop the community-mindedness necessary to support Middlemarch's transition to an inclusive society. By explaining his failure as a failure to be a true steward, his disappointment can be seen not as the case of a social body's allergic reaction to a harmless foreign substance but as the result of Lydgate's own

inability to integrate self and other and acknowledge his participation in other narratives of reform.

What Lydgate is fatally blind to is that he is a man whose destiny is shaped, not by medical reforms, but by the Reform. As a member of the very class whose non-propertied status is about to be enfranchised by the Reform Act, he is empowered by his mobility, by his ability to form and maintain a legitimized identity without a close association to place, landscape, custom, or kin. The very portability that allows him to choose his residence also frees him from the obligation to stand in anything but an independent relation to that very locale, casting his vision of non-hierarchical relations in the light of non-attachment. Indeed, his penchant for the provinces is motivated by more than his distaste for competition. "In the country," he admits, "people have less pretension to knowledge, and are less of companions, but for that reason they affect one's amour-propre less: one makes less bad blood, and can follow one's own course more quietly" (II.xvii.163). Lydgate's desire to avoid the type of social relations that could hinder his work for the public good, therefore, quietly exposes a desire for non-interference and an inclination to protect against threats to his independence.

To this end, Lydgate wishes not only to avoid the "social truckling" of his London peers but also that crucible of human relations, marriage. His attitude toward the relationship between family life and his work is telling of his general tendency to think compartmentally about his medical discoveries and reforms rather than view them as efforts whose potential for social disruption demand that a true steward approach them with a community orientation. Recalling his bachelor days in Paris, during which romance was simply a revitalizing recess from his work that he treated "just as [if he had] thrown himself under the breath of the sweet south on a bank of violets for a while, without prejudice to his galvanism, to which he would presently return" (II.xv.142), he

imagines married life to offer a similar independence. Despite his resolution to remain single, once he becomes engaged he tells Farebrother that he is impatient for his wedding to Rosamond because "This unsettled state of affairs uses up the time, and when one has notions in science, every moment is an opportunity. I feel sure that marriage must be the best thing for a man who wants to work steadily. He has everything at home then—no teasing with personal speculations—he can get calmness and freedom" (IV.xxxvi.328). In his "unreflecting egoism," Lydgate fails to see that accepting a dependent in the form of a bride enmeshes him in another's will; he expects Rosamond to revere his mind from a distance (VI.lviii.547) without considering how his preoccupation with his work infringes on her own sense of self.

In a similar way, he miscalculates the effect of his scientific interests on his neighbors, who are deeply offended by his request to perform an autopsy on Mrs. Goby because it associates her body "with the victims of Burke and Hare" (V.xlv.427),[38] threatening their sense of personhood rather than convincing them of their interdependence. Indeed, he himself does not think in quite stewardly terms about the ultimate social good to be gleaned from dissecting the townsfolk: "I just do what comes before me to do. I can't help people's ignorance and spite" (V.xlv.428), he says comfortably to Farebrother. His vision of himself as a mediator of change is ultimately one of defiance, not reconciliation,[39] and his personal pride prevents him from exerting the sympathetic imagination necessary to resolve the conflict between his responsibilities to self and other.

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[38] Irishmen who sold the corpses of those they murdered to anatomical researchers.

[39] This attitude becomes even clearer in a conversation he has with his wife Rosamond. She remarks that he has "enemies enough already," to which he replies, "So had Vesalius, Rosy. No wonder the medical fogies in Middlemarch are jealous, when some of the greatest doctors living were fierce upon Vesalius because they had believed in Galen, and he showed that Galen was wrong. They called him a liar and a poisonous monster. But the facts of the human frame were on his side; and so he got the better of them […] he had a good deal of fighting to the last" (V.xlv.430).

Lydgate is therefore unprepared to manage the individualizing effects of the Reform Act and its reconstruction of personhood on his own medical reforms. The townspeople are aghast at his request to dissect Mrs. Goby, for example, because her respectable income (V.xlv.427) seemed to assure and safeguard her selfhood, removing her from the class of people who could be treated as anonymous sacrifices to the cause of science. Though Middlemarch's approach to property means that preserving Mrs. Goby's personal dignity, even posthumously, is more important than furthering the welfare of the collective, it also creates a collective tenuously brought together by their need to finance a social identity. In the absence of fixed property, which provides duties and defines social relations even for impoverished gentlefolk, only cash flow can define one's social ties. The likes of prominent Middlemarch families like the Vincys and the Plymdales, for example, are connected by financial indebtedness to the same banker, Nicholas Bulstrode. So ubiquitous is the presence of Mr. Bulstrode's money in both private life and public projects that one citizen remarks, "It'll be a bad thing for the town though, if Bulstrode's money goes out of it" (VI.lxi.678), a withdrawal that would have both economic and social consequences.

Though dependence on portable property is clearly replacing dependence on fixed property to define self and community in Middlemarch, portable property leaves fewer avenues available for creating the same sense of enduring, affective mutuality and contextualized individuality. The dangers of this predicament are brought to the fore in the debates surrounding the New Fever Hospital. The hospital is funded by Mr. Bulstrode, who problematically wields his wealth and the debts owed him to satisfy his own desires for "mastery and predominance" (VIII.lxxi.683) and "would willingly have continued to spare a late yearly sum that he might rule [the hospital] dictatorially without any Board" (V.xlv.425). The hospital, however, is a public project, and Bulstrode's use

of his financing to secure exclusive power causes Middlemarchers to withdraw their interest and investment, both financial (V.xlv.425) and in the sense that they do not wish to accept it as a Middlemarch institution or support its success. Ultimately, though Lydgate believes the hospital will save lives, contribute to medical research, and even increase Middlemarch's importance, most of the townspeople so resent Bulstrode's exclusive use of property that they reject these greater aims because their sense of independence is offended. When they hear the terms upon which the hospital is to be run, for example, "There [is] a refusal on the part of every medical man in the town to become a visitor at the fever hospital" (V.xlv.426). In this way, a potentially unifying project loses its power to shape a more inclusive Middlemarch identity.

For his part, Lydgate believes that he can remain aloof from the obligations entailed by his financial connections with Bulstrode, who has appointed him the director of the hospital. "Bulstrode is nothing to me," he says thoughtlessly to Farebrother, "except on public grounds. As to getting very closely united to him, I am not fond enough of him for that" (V.xlv.428). By overlooking that, in the age of portable property, binding ties can easily be created without affection, Lydgate becomes vulnerable to "the hampering threadlike pressure" (II.xviii.169) of a community whose approach to property fosters suspicion, jealousy, and isolation. His attempt to deny that financial obligations exert any personal influence also indicates that he does not even consider that these connections could be used to build affective ties—that, if property is the medium drawing the town into fellowship, dispositions toward property could be used to create a community based on care and mutual responsibility.

As he sinks deeper into galling financial obligations, therefore, Lydgate forfeits his potential to act as a steward when he is forced to give up his reforming ambitions and depart from the provinces to pursue a purely profitable practice, leaving Middlemarch

vulnerable to the inroads of cholera. Though Lydgate's failure to unite Middlemarch around his medical reforms exposes the locals to the danger of disease, Eliot has integrated two additional stewards into the Middlemarch milieu to explore possibilities for transcending the potential harm generated by new approaches to property and usher Middlemarch safely into a new era.

A New Theresa

Like Tertius Lydgate, Dorothea Brooke and her sister Celia are newcomers in Middlemarch, having lived with their uncle on his estate, Tipton Grange, for less than a year when the novel opens (I.i.8). Dorothea possesses many characteristics likely to recommend her as a steward. The narrator tells us that "all her eagerness for acquirement," whether of property or knowledge, "lay within that full current of sympathetic motive in which her ideas and impulses were habitually swept along" (I.x.80). In other words, she exemplifies the principle of ownership without possession, uncomfortable with the possession of wealth unless it can be used "to make other people's lives better to them" (VIII.lxxvi.720). The position of stewardship she takes towards her property is accompanied by what Caleb Garth calls "a head for business most uncommon in a woman" (VI.lvi.518), by which he means to praise her unerring sense of the interdependence of work and wellbeing, of the human element in all projects of improvement. This sensibility positions her to direct the transitions affecting her locale with an eye toward care. Moreover, approaching Dorothea as a steward allows her to be seen as an ethical agent beyond the confines of matrimony to which most critics limit her.

That Dorothea is keenly interested in a more encompassing ethical role is exemplified in her attitudes toward estate improvement. Like other reformers in the Victorian era, she sees the potential power of education and has "set going" an infant

school in the village (I.i.11). She also grates at her uncle's neglect of his estate and his retrogressive attitude toward innovation. Her pet pursuit is the design of cottages, the upkeep of which was decidedly in the steward's domain. In his *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (1775), Nathaniel Kent, for example, urges that the agent is "to act as their [the cottagers'] friend, and protector" (216), seeing both to the proper upkeep of the cottages (206) and ensuring that their inhabitants are not charged extortionate rents (213). To Dorothea, the design and construction of cottages is more informed by her ethic of care than by technical interests. She tells her erstwhile suitor Sir James Chettam, "I think we deserve to be beaten out of our beautiful houses with a scourge of small cords—all of us who let tenants live in such sties as we see round us. Life in cottages might be happier than ours, if they were real houses fit for human beings from whom we expect duties and affections" (I.iii.29). Dorothea's statement reflects what Gilligan describes as a distinctively female perspective on the alienating, and therefore dangerous, effects of the "failure of response" (38). "If aggression is tied, as women perceive, to the fracture of human connection," she explains, "then the activities of care, as their fantasies suggest, are the activities that make the social world safe, by avoiding isolation and preventing aggression" (43). As Gilligan suggests, Dorothea's zeal for cottages is actually a project to create a sustainable community based on mutual affection and responsibility, one that can keep the potential violence prompted by the dissolution of such ties at bay through acts of care that reconfirm individuals' interdependence.

The specter of the Reform Act makes Dorothea's efforts especially relevant because of the way it threatens to bring community members into a closer proximity that will only reveal their alienation from one another, as illustrated above by the confrontation between Mr. Brooke and Mr. Dagley. However, like Mr. Brooke and his tenant, one of Dorothea's handicaps in her efforts to bless others is her class position,

which affects her relationship with property and allies her with a more conservative social order generally wedded to old, increasingly unviable forms of community. The Brookes are decidedly genteel—their "connexions, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably 'good'" (*MM* I.i.7). As a result, the Brookes socialize in more removed circles, both geographically and socially. Dorothea rarely enters the town of Middlemarch (e.g., V.xliii.408), her sphere being limited to Tipton and Lowick parishes and, briefly, Rome. This geographic circumscription largely limits her associations to those typically dictated by the long-held customs associated with fixed property, socializing with landed families and taking an attitude of patronage towards members of lower classes. The distance between even Lydgate's and Dorothea's milieu can therefore seem vast, as is illustrated by the aspirations of his wife, Rosamond Vincy, a merchant's daughter who desires to get

> a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people, and perhaps at last associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on the Middlemarchers […] once when she had seen the Miss Brookes accompanying their uncle at the county assizes, and seated among the aristocracy, she had envied them, notwithstanding their plain dress. (II.xvi.156)

The rarefied air of exclusivity in which Dorothea moves seems to limit her scope as an agent of change, as does her unfamiliarity with those whose lives and sense of self are shaped by more independent attitudes toward property.

Dorothea's class status combines with her gender to create a double-bind. Not only does her gender exclude her from actual political participation, but her class position exacerbates the expectations of female propriety to which she is compelled to conform. Her fervently sympathetic nature and boundless energy to do good become actively painful to her in "the stifling oppression of that gentlewoman's world, where everything [is] done for her and none asked for her aid" (III.xxviii.257). However, her ability to act

"without her feelings being checked at every turn" (VIII.lxxii.694) is significantly affected by the death of her wealthy husband, Mr. Casaubon, who not only leaves her mentally and emotionally free to "have as many notions of her own as she likes" (VI.liv.504), as Celia says, but the property and authority over property that will enable her to carry out those notions. It is this position, far more than her position as an intermediary in the transfer of Mr. Brooke's estate to Dorothea's first-born son,[40] that influences her ability to act as a steward.

Moreover, Dorothea's emotional range does not limit her social vision to Middlemarch as Rosamond's petty preoccupations do. Like St. Theresa, to whom she is compared in the Prelude, her heart "beat[s] to a national idea," and is frustrated by "domestic reality" (prelude.3) in the form of local prejudices and fixations. The community she longs after is akin to the "New Jerusalem" (I.iv.35), a concept that transcends locality and all divisive differences through unified spiritual endeavor on a higher plane. Importantly, however, her perspective encompasses and accommodates local strivings without undermining them: she yearns for a "lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there" (I.i.8). Therefore, though class, gender, and physical location may exert retarding influences on her project of care, Dorothea believes these factors can be overcome by creating a sense of larger community in which such differences can be reconciled and new rules of conduct formed. This belief, as I demonstrate, contributes to her eventual departure from fixed property in her quest to create community.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to Dorothea's true exercise of care, however, is her inability to limit her sense of responsibility and especially to include herself within her

[40] "She was regarded as an heiress; for not only had the sisters seven hundred a-year each from their parents, but if Dorothea married and had a son, that son would inherit Mr. Brooke's estate, presumably worth about three thousand a-year" (*MM* I.i.9).

own sphere of care. Her dilemma is precisely the quintessentially feminine problem of "limiting responsibilities without abandoning moral concern," as Gilligan describes it (21). If, as Gilligan asserts, "we experience relationship only insofar as we differentiate other from self" (63), Dorothea's failure to care for or develop awareness of self, as demonstrated by her "ethic of self-sacrifice" (132), compromises her efforts to preserve relationship. In the world of *Middlemarch*, the pattern of productive reconciliation between individual and communal values is found in marriage relationships that are characterized by a happy balance between work (which Gilligan identifies with individualistic values)[41] and love. Lydgate's approach to marriage, for example, is unable to achieve this balance and results in his subsequent inability to further his reform efforts and his disqualification from stewardship. As a woman, Dorothea's ability to act in the world is even more dependent on her marriage choice, but she approaches it with the attitude of a martyr. The narrator reports,

> Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage. She felt sure that she would have accepted the judicious Hooker, if she had been born in time to save him from that wretched mistake he made in matrimony; or John Milton when his blindness had come on; or any of the other great men whose odd habits it would have been glorious piety to endure. (I.i.10)

This unfortunate blindness to self leads her to enter into a marriage with a man who, instead of expanding her horizons of benevolence, shrinks them.

It is not long after her marriage that Dorothea is disabused of her dreams of the souls-stretching effects of complete self-sacrifice. After just weeks of married life, "The large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither"

[41] Gilligan writes, "Power and separation secure the man in an identity achieved through work, but they leave him at a distance from others, who seem in some sense out of sight" (163).

(II.xx.183). This dead-end image of her married life, subsequently reinforced by an image of marriage as an "enclosed basin" (II.xx.184), reflects the ways in which her ability to care is diminished not only within her home but outside of it. Unable to assist Mr. Casaubon in his research, which in any case is revealed to be less than the great work she had anticipated yoking herself to, she is also forbidden by Casaubon to enact the justice she desires for Will Ladislaw and even her mobility becomes constricted as Casaubon's ill health and selfish absorption of her energy begins to "[take] her up entirely" (IV.xxxviii.358). As a consequence, "She [is] humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling" rather than being empowered by it, and "all her strength was scattered in fits of agitation, of struggle, of despondency" rather than in activities of care (II.xx.186). It is Will Ladislaw who articulates the problem with her complete self-neglect and outlines for Dorothea the path she must walk to achieve the balance between responsibility and individuality that will make her a true steward: "I call that the fanaticism of sympathy," he says of her inability to enjoy art because others do not have access to it. "If you carried it out you ought to be miserable in your own goodness, and turn evil that you might have no advantage over others. The best piety is to enjoy—[…] enjoyment radiates. It is of no use to try and take care of all the world; that is being taken care of when you feel delight" (II.xxii.205). Will's philosophy shows Dorothea that to truly live a life of care, she must appropriately limit responsibility to others and learn to care for self.

Dorothea's attitude of absolute self-sacrifice initially shapes her approach to property, her concerns about which are central to her desire "to make life beautiful" (II.xxii.205) for all and perhaps her only means of doing so. The traditional obligations of fixed property are attractive to her because of her passion for duty; landownership clearly demarcates the roles and obligations of those associated with it. Moreover, fixed property seems in harmony with her vision of the New Jerusalem, or at least with the all-inclusive

vision of community it represents. "Surely," she says, "it is better to spend money in finding out how men can make the most of the land which supports them all, than in keeping dogs and horses only to gallop over it. It is not a sin to make yourself poor in performing experiments for the good of all" (I.ii.16). Here, land is the uniting factor of the human family, an almost spiritual medium for cultivating sympathy that easily accommodates her martyr's sensibility.

Dorothea soon begins to understand, however, some of the limitations of fixed property. This understanding is primarily conveyed through her relationship with the landscape surrounding her husband's manor, which comes to represent the restriction rather than the expansion of sympathetic feeling. After returning from her honeymoon, the reader first glimpses her in her new home as she is tellingly "absorbed" in "the still, white enclosure which made her visible world" (III.xxviii.257). Now confining, this landscape no longer speaks to her of the unity and complete devotion she had once imagined, as her new vision of the landscape now indicates: "She was inwardly seeing the light of years to come in her own home and over the English fields and elms and hedge-bordered highroads; and feeling that the way in which they might be filled with joyful devotedness was not so clear as it had been" (II.xx.190). Interestingly, she no longer associates land with clarity of duty, and this disillusionment is strengthened by her husband's easy dismissal of Will Ladislaw's right to some of Mr. Casaubon's estate. Considering Will's impoverished state with "a sympathy that grew to agitation" (IV.xxxvii.349) as she also contemplates the legal injustice of his poverty, she asks, "Was inheritance a question of liking, or of responsibility?" Her answer is in complete harmony with her own unlimited sense of care: "All the energy of Dorothea's nature went on the side of responsibility—the fulfillment of claims founded on our own deeds, such as marriage and parentage" (IV.xxxvii.349). Mr. Casaubon, however, who "acts up to his

sense of justice" but remains a "sort of parchment code" (I.viii.64), unfeelingly denies Will's claims (IV.xxxvii.352). This incident further erodes Dorothea's belief that fixed property, even with its legally established system of rights, can either indicate the direction or facilitate the movement of her sympathetic impulses.

Perhaps nothing shakes Dorothea's belief in fixed property as much as the outcome of this midnight conversation with her husband. After his death, she learns that her husband has left a codicil in his will stating that she will forfeit ownership of his property if she marries Will Ladislaw. Upon learning this, Dorothea's world is described as being "in a state of convulsive change" (V.l.461), the effects of which are a complete paradigm shift in her attitude toward property. It becomes "the sign of [a] broken tie" (V.l.464), a memorial of injustice and a "cruelly effective means of hindering" (V.l.464) the very acts that would have allowed Dorothea to restore and heal a long-broken family relationship. What is more difficult to admit to herself is that Mr. Casaubon's past behavior and, finally, his will have obstructed Dorothea's own emotional development. The will importantly awakens her to the realization that she can no longer subordinate care for herself to care for others. As she contemplates all that the codicil implies, her changed attitude is apparent: "The living, suffering man was no longer before her to awaken her pity: there remained only the retrospect of painful subjection to a husband […] whose exorbitant claims for himself had even blinded his scrupulous care for his own character, and made him defeat his own pride by shocking men of ordinary honour" (V.l.464). With this new understanding, however, comes the crushing knowledge that the path by which she could most fully realize a harmony between self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment—marriage to Will—has been made virtually impassable. Marriage to Will would have both restored his property to him and allowed the property itself to act as the basis of Will and Dorothea's achievement of loving interdependence. The retarding

effects of fixed property on Dorothea's development as a true steward are therefore literally realized in her inability to reestablish land as an affective medium through a marriage union with Will Ladislaw.

With this possibility excluded, Dorothea initially attempts to rectify the harm caused by an exclusive approach to fixed property. Anxious to reform land and thereby reestablish ethical relationships with others, she focuses on transmuting even her cash income into land. Her goal is to build a utopian community: "I have delightful plans. I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well. I should know every one of the people and be their friend" (VI.lv.517). Her plans for the land are truly stewardly—she will own the property but use it for the good of others. Significantly, this vision of a community knit together by love is also a place where brotherhood is enhanced by recognizing and valuing individuals and individual effort. Seeking to compensate for her husband's unstewardly conduct, Dorothea intends to implement her new appreciation of the need to balance love and work in this familiar medium.

Dorothea's almost Medieval dream of a harmonious community is, however, short-lived. In attempting to convert her cash to land, she finds that she has "too little for any great scheme of the sort I like best" (VIII.lxxvi.720), a commentary on how inaccessible land is becoming in an age of reform that casts fixed property as the basis of privilege, exclusivity, and abused power. Indeed, the distance of her dream from her reality—from Middlemarch as a place and from the sensibilities of the Reform Era and the Industrial Revolution—only illustrate how unachievable her vision is through fixed property. Realizing how complicated it will be to resolve both the awakening and the restricting effects of Mr. Casaubon's will, she finds herself "In her luxurious home, wandering under the boughs of her own great trees, her thought […] going out over the

lot of others, and her emotions […] imprisoned" (VIII.lxxvi.715-716). The narrator's emphasis on Dorothea's ownership of her sumptuous surroundings seems to suggest Dorothea's own awareness of and oppression by a feeling of exclusivity as she moves through the landscape, a feeling that ultimately conflicts with her awareness of others' problems and paralyzes her ability to act on her sympathetic impulses. It is perhaps this experience with the physical manifestations of her property that finally prepares her to readily accept the potential of a new medium for her stewardship.

As soon as Dorothea reenters her luxurious home, she finds Lydgate waiting there and with him a new direction for her stewardly energies. Lydgate, needing funds to save his Middlemarch practice and his household from financial ruin, has become the debtor of Nicholas Bulstrode. However, the banker's own scandal—his negligent murder of the man who could expose his criminal past—has also cast suspicion on Lydgate, who accepted his money not knowing Bulstrode's intention to create a sense of obligation in Lydgate strong enough to hide the banker's crime. Lydgate's situation offers Dorothea a new venue for reform: with fixed property becoming less relevant to the lives of Middlemarchers, their true need is for a steward of portable property who can show them how to use money, not for the self-gratifying, individualistic ends of a Nicholas Bulstrode, but to re-create the community sensibility that has deteriorated through distance from the old customs and duties associated with land. Dorothea embraces this role, proposing a sort of communalism of cash with Lydgate: "Think how much money I have; it would be like taking a burthen from me if you took some of it every year till you got free from this fettering want of income. Why should not people do these things? It is so difficult to make shares at all even. This is one way" (VIII.lxxvi.722). This suggestion, more moderate than her previous schemes, demonstrates a more complete awareness of

both her personal limitations and Lydgate's need for independence in its conditions, not of absolute surrender, but of balance.

The outcome of her meeting with Lydgate also indicates how cash, because it can be used as an affective medium without reference to location, actually broadens the scope of Dorothea's sympathy while allowing her "to discern and alleviate the 'real and recognizable trouble' of this world" (Gilligan 100) in ways that are relevant to her neighbors. It is as a possessor of portable property that Dorothea finds a way "to lead a grand life here—now—in England" (I.iii.27), to apply her New Jerusalem ideals to address local needs. Her decision to personally carry to Rosamond the £1,000 check that will clear Lydgate's debt brings her into contact with the "involuntary, palpitating life" (VIII.lxxx.741) that her status as a landed gentlewoman had insulated her from—she actually enters Middlemarch. Her decision to do so results not only in the restoration of Lydgate's marriage but facilitates Dorothea's own, allowing her to perform her ultimate act of stewardship.

Eager that Rosamond should "accept her sympathy" (VIII.lxxvii.729), now represented by the check, Dorothea enters Rosamond's drawing room to find Rosamond and Will Ladislaw seemingly engaged in the intimate talk of lovers. The agitation produced by this sight leads to a conversation between Dorothea and Rosamond that not only has the beneficent effect, as Lydgate notices, of making his wife "turn to him again" (VIII.lxxxii.754), but of confirming Will's love for Dorothea (see Marcus). Her act of care, therefore, ultimately becomes an opportunity for self-care as she is confronted by the possibility of personal fulfillment and happiness. Now knowing that portable property can be successfully used to respond to her community's need for caring relationships, Dorothea is prepared to relinquish Mr. Casaubon's fixed property, which she was forbidden to act as steward toward, through her marriage to Will. In doing so, she

commits to portable property, claiming that she will "learn what everything costs" (VIII.lxxxiii.762). Though perhaps intended to make the reader smile at Dorothea's naiveté, this statement nevertheless represents an important transition for Dorothea from a life of generalities to a life of detail, a life in which the expanded opportunities for care opened by her stewardship of portable property must include a vision of how that care affects even the individual.

An antidote to Bulstrode's destructive methods of money management, Dorothea's marriage therefore not only models how a community connected by monetary interests can use that money to promote care rather than competitiveness but shows that Middlemarchers, as locals, can be included in the national acts of care represented by the Reform Bill, the medical reforms, or the incursion of the railway without the destruction of their self-hood. This principle is exemplified in her union with Will, who throughout the novel has been engaged in the reform efforts. Their marriage leads both to a fulfilling life of love and "a life filled also with a beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and marking out for herself" (VIII.finale.782). In other words, this embrace of change and transition through a reconciliation of love and work provides Dorothea, always hyperaware of the restrictions placed on her sympathetic energy, with a structure for care activities she had lost with her fixed property. This is a reconciliation that can be enacted regardless of locality. Therefore, as Will predicted, in Dorothea's decision to care for herself she discovers an infinitely wider scope for her care efforts. Transferred into a political sphere where the effects of her actions can reach all of England, the narrator tells us that "the effect of her *being* on those around her was incalculably diffusive" (VIII.finale.785, emphasis added), indicating that her own achievement of love and joy, her own realization of self rather than her loss of it, allowed her to contribute broadly to "the growing good of the world" (VIII.finale.785) by acting

on individuals, one by one. By using money affectively and achieving a reconciliation between individualistic and community values, Dorothea acts as a true steward who makes the Reform less dangerous for Middlemarch. Perhaps more importantly, however, Dorothea provides a model to Eliot's readers, who were both recovering from the effects of a second reform act and anticipating a third. I discuss this idea further in the concluding section.

Dorothea's movement towards care for self parallels her movement toward learning how to properly steward portable property and reconcile national and local, self and other. Eliot's second successful steward, Fred Vincy, faces a similar journey as he struggles to accept responsibility for others and reform his own and his town's approach to property.

The Hopeful Young Gentleman

As the ne'er-do-well eldest son of Middlemarch's mayor, Fred Vincy is perhaps the most chronically under-represented *Middlemarch* main character in Eliot criticism. One of the only publications to dedicate any sustained attention to him suggests that Fred is a moral wrench thrown into *Middlemarch*, claiming, "In the over-protecting of Fred and the marginalizing of Mary the web of the novel is unravelled and a fundamental structural and moral weakness revealed" (Martin 4). The author, Bruce K. Martin, continues, "Fred Vincy enjoys a happier outcome and with less change in outlook or behavior than any of the novel's other central agents" (21). However, analyzing Fred as a steward reveals that he is intimately involved in representing, communicating, and resolving the central ethical problems of the novel. It is true that he seems to have little to recommend him as a steward. Though "an open affectionate fellow, with a good bottom to his character" (III.xxii.218), many of Fred's happier qualities are supported by an

optimistic belief that the universe exists largely to care for him and that those around him will hardly be harmed by participating in this grand scheme. Unlike Lydgate and Dorothea, therefore, Fred is not an adherent of the principle of work—the idea that individual effort should be exerted to care for oneself—and still less of the principles of love and sacrifice. As Mary Garth laments, "How can you bear to be so contemptible, when others are working and striving, and there are so many things to be done—how can you bear to be fit for nothing in the world that is useful?" (III.xxv.240). His behavior clearly lies far from the ideal of a merger between work and love—the idea that individual effort and care for self can, when informed by love, extend to care for others. "I will try to be anything you like, Mary, if you will say that you love me" (III.xxv.240), Fred counters, clearly contextualizing his own work within a loving relationship, but premising his willingness to work on the preexistence of another's love. Mary's insistence that Fred first commit to the principle of work is instrumental in allowing Fred to develop the attributes of a steward capable of fostering love.

Despite his unpromising qualifications, Fred is well-positioned for stewardship because of his liminal social position, which is as much defined by his masculinity as Dorothea's is by her femininity. His father has educated him as a gentleman, hoping he would enter the church. Though this education has led Fred to develop a certain "bitterness" at being "born the son of a Middlemarch manufacturer, and inevitable heir to nothing in particular" (I.xii.111), he believes himself ill-suited to be a clergyman and has so far failed to obtain his degree. With little understanding of trade (he has about as much practical economic sense as Dorothea)[42] and no prospects of working in the profession for which he has been expensively educated, Fred hopes to maintain his accustomed

[42] The narrator notes wryly, "Of what might be the capacity of his father's pocket, Fred had only a vague notion: was not trade elastic? And would not the deficiencies of one year be made up for by the surplus of another?" (III.xxiii.216).

lifestyle by adopting a position at the opposite extreme of his father's mercantilism—land ownership. Though "tacit expectations of what would be done for him by uncle Featherstone determined the angle at which most people viewed Fred Vincy in Middlemarch" (III.xxii.220), Fred falls victim to Mr. Featherstone's use of property to manipulate others and fails to inherit Stone Court. This disappointment shatters not only Fred's financial security, but his social identity. He is left suspended between fixed and portable property, unable to use either to construct a sense of self, fulfill his gender role in the world of masculine competitive achievement, or define his place in his community.

It is not this sense of aimlessness alone, however, that places Fred on the path to stewardship. His love for Mary and his inevitable association with the Garths teach Fred that his position is an opportunity, not a loss. In his carelessness, Fred has both willingly and unknowingly participated in the activities and accepted the dispositions toward property that endanger the Middlemarch community. He is, for example, a voluntary contestant in the competition for Mr. Featherstone's estate. However, he is less consciously implicated in his father's questionable business dealings. Mrs. Cadwallader describes Mr. Vincy as "one of those who suck the life out of the wretched hand loom weavers in Tipton and Freshitt" (IV.xxxiv.307), and he is linked into a network that profits from the sale of sub-standard and possibly even toxic goods (II.xiii.121). Furthermore, his business depends on the antagonistic debtor-creditor relationships that connect much of Middlemarch and which Dorothea sees a need to reform. Without Dorothea's sympathetic acumen, however, Fred unquestioningly participates in the established system without recognizing it as an impoverished substitute for affective community relations. He even valorizes the system, gauging his and others' masculinity and therefore social value by the size of their debts: "Fred had known men to whom he would have been ashamed of confessing the smallness of his scrapes" (I.xii.111). While

Fred is awakened to the harm caused by the abuse of fixed property through his own disinheritance, he becomes aware of the harm generated by the conventional handling of portable property when he is confronted with the harm he has done others.

Fred's paradigm shift begins when he involves Mr. Garth in his debts, incurred in the name of pursuing the "pleasures" that define the gentleman's world. Believing in Fred's essential goodness, Mr. Garth agrees to put his name on a bill for £160 that Fred cannot immediately pay (III.xxiii.219). When further mishandling of his money causes Fred to be £110 short of the full sum when the bill comes due, Mr. Garth becomes responsible for the remaining debt. Fred, who "rather than incur the accusation of falsehood […] would incur some trouble and self-restraint" (III.xxiii.220), is primarily consumed with the "sense that he must seem dishonourable, and sink in the opinion of the Garths" (III.xxiv.233) because of his failure to satisfy principles of justice, a preoccupation that Gilligan identifies as distinctly masculine. Thinking only of the Garth's right to be paid, he "had not concerned himself with the inconvenience and possible injury that his breach might occasion them, for this exercise of the imagination on other people's needs is not common with hopeful young gentlemen" (III.xxiv.234). His visit to the Garths, however, forces him to consider the debt as an act of aggression, and after observing the Garths' disappointment and anxiety, "he suddenly saw himself as a pitiful rascal who was robbing two women of their savings" (III.xxiv.234). This incident shows Fred that portable property, when transferred without a sense of personal responsibility for its effects on others, results in an increased proximity to others while destroying the trust and fellowship that would make that proximity productive and safe.

This experience is also significant for Fred because it allows him to observe the affective possibilities of portable property. As the Garths discuss how to solve the difficulty Mr. Garth's soft-heartedness and Fred's irresponsibility have brought upon

them, Mrs. Garth and Mary actively respond to the family's trouble by offering to pay the debt with money they have saved through individual effort and sacrifice. Mary best summarizes the family's spirit of united work when she tells Mr. Featherstone she has gladly given her father her savings because "I consider my father and mother the best part of myself" (III.xxv.243). Thus, in the Garth's hands, cash is not used to reinforce unequal power in a creditor-debtor system, but to express love and communal values, as Dorothea does, through gifts that neutralize that system's threat to such values. Indeed, to the Garths, indebtedness is destructive because only through maintaining, restoring or attaining independence can true community be achieved; self-sufficiency liberates one from obligations that prevent one from helping others. They therefore exemplify Graver's observation that throughout Eliot's novels, "devotion to work," rather than being an individualistic pursuit, is, when paired with love, "associated with the creation and continuity of community" (85). This preoccupation is not exclusive to the female members of the Garth family. Mr. Garth, for example, reveres "business" as a uniting effort. He is early inspired by the ambition to have "as effective a share as possible in this sublime labour" (*MM* III.xxiv.236), to make his individual contribution to that "myriad-headed, myriad-handed" entity "by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed" (III.xxiv.235). Mr. Garth's stewardly approach to his own labor and Susan and Mary Garth's demonstration of commitment to care values show Fred how his approach to property can be reformed.

Fred's developmental trajectory after this awakening follows an arc described by Gilligan and re-articulated in Graver's study of Eliot: "tied to love relationships and to vocational calling," Fred experiences "the widening of connections and social sympathies initiated by commitments that originate in the private self but lead to the individual's participation in a larger life" (85). Following the Garths' model and motivated by his love

for Mary, Fred first accepts responsibility for himself and seeks to demonstrate his new commitment to work by finally receiving his bachelor's degree (*MM* V.lii.480). Dispossessed from his father's manufacturing business and from proprietorship of his own land,[43] extremes that have, in any case, proven to be individually unable to sustain the harmony between love and work that Fred is seeking, Fred considers taking up a profession. However, he continues to feel dissatisfied with entering the church. This discomfort seems to be significant for Eliot, who throughout the novel hints that religion, specifically the institution of the Church of England, is becoming socially irrelevant. Even Wellington, as J. C. D. Clark notes, observed that the Church of England was losing its ability to define community at the time of the Reform Act as dissenting beliefs introduced a democratic element that opposed the "aristocratic influence of the Landed Gentry" (556). Eliot subtly notes this disintegration of the Church's unifying influence in religious figures such as the overzealous Bulstrode and the clergymen Mr. Farebrother and Mr. Tyke. The relationships among these men are shown to be divisive, Bulstrode's religion is merely a front for his desire for earthly glory, and even Dorothea notes that Mr. Tyke's "apostolic" posture "would be of no use at Lowick" (*MM* V.l.466). Though attentive and loving in his duties as a parish priest, even the likable Mr. Farebrother has more interest in his entomological pursuits and feels himself "not altogether in the right vocation" (II.xvii.162), suggesting that the talents that make him a good clergyman would perhaps have been more usefully applied had he pursued science. Eliot, in fact, seems to propose a new religion—a new medium for social life and unifying belief—in the concept of work as defined by the novel's quintessential steward. She describes Caleb Garth's veneration for work as one of "religious regard," explaining that he utters the

[43] Fred, in fact, notes this himself, telling Mr. Farebrother that "My father can't spare me any capital, else I might go into farming. And he has no room for me in his trade" (V.lii.481).

word “business” with the same reverence with which “a consecrated symbol is wrapped in its gold-fringed linen” (III.xxiv.235). The narrator opines, “Though he had never regarded himself as other but an orthodox Christian […] I think his virtual divinities were good practical schemes, accurate work, and the faithful completion of undertakings: his prince of darkness was a slack workman” (III.xxiv.236). Indeed, Garth’s work and his commitment to doing it well spin salutary webs of connection throughout Middlemarch as the number of his employers increases and as these employers begin to feel each others’ influence. With the new model of community creation and maintenance being provided by Caleb Garth’s commitment to “business,” it is natural that Eliot has Fred renounce life as a clergyman to pursue a career as a steward.

Fred’s transition to a life of purposeful work does indeed put him in contact with a “larger life,” transforming his individual effort into a project of care. His decision to apprentice himself to Mr. Garth, Middlemarch’s most trusted land agent, both allows him to be united to Mary and involves him in negotiating some of the large-scale changes affecting Middlemarch. The circumstances surrounding his embarkment on his new career in fact represent a moment of such negotiation. Mr. Garth, surveying a property of Dorothea’s with the intention of selling it to the railroad, happens to be working near several railroad agents engaged in the same task when Fred rides by in time to see the agents attacked by a gang of local farm laborers. Fred’s intervention prevents any severe damage from being done and allows him to witness Caleb Garth’s direct act of stewardship in his handling of the aftermath. Believing that “to do a good day’s work and do it well” was “part of [the laborers’] welfare” and having “a strong sense of fellowship with them” (VI.lvi.525), Garth acts as a mediator between the potentially harmful force of the railroad and the supremely local mentality of the attackers: “[The railroad] may do a bit of harm here and there, to this and that; and so does the sun in heaven,” he reasons

(VI.lvi.525). “But I want the lads here not to do what will make things worse for themselves. The cattle may have a heavy load, but it won’t help ‘em to throw it over into the roadside pit, when it’s partly their own fodder” (VI.lvi.526), he concludes. Garth’s insight into the interdependence of national and local activities allows him to turn a potential danger into a benefit by extracting a promise from the laborers that they will no longer interfere with the railroad agents.

Clearly, Fred’s choice to purse a career as a land agent places him at the epicenter of transition, and his allegiance to Mr. Garth provides him with a model of care with which to approach his new duties. His profession also places this transition at the center of his life. As the narrator observes, “the infant struggles of the railway system […] determined the course of this history with regard to [Fred and Mary]” (VI.lvi.519). Interestingly, then, Fred’s successful merging of love and work through his relationship with Mary seems to absorb the shock of change and transform it into a productive energy. The danger posed by the railway is that it increases both proximity and social distance by empowering individuals with mobility and destroys the integrity of landscape and therefore the fabric of community. Fred mitigates both threats by reinvesting himself, as a professional man and therefore a representative of social democratization, in the land, approaching land not as landlord nor as a capitalist, but as a steward.

When Mr. Bulstrode, who purchased Stone Court from Mr. Featherstone’s son, is forced to leave Middlemarch because of his scandal, Fred is asked to live at Stone Court and manage the land and stock. Fred’s management of Stone Court is his ultimate act of stewardship, modeling for Middlemarch the productive contribution of local lives and individual effort to a broader, more abstract community. In a sense, Fred reforms Stone Court. Under Featherstone’s ownership, the property was used to spur aggression and competitiveness; under Bulstrode’s, it represented the fruits of competitive achievement.

For Fred, it represents the potential for attaining "a solid mutual happiness" (VIII.finale.779) with Mary and a defined position in his community. Both this happiness and this position are achieved through productivity that retains little of its masculine individualism. Working not for himself, but for others, Fred preserves Stone Court's landscape and therefore its ability to reinforce communal identity. The narrator suggests that "On inquiry it might possibly be found that Fred and Mary still inhabit Stone Court—that the creeping plants still cast the foam of their blossoms over the fine stone wall into the field where the walnut-trees stand in stately row" (VIII.finale.781). More importantly, however, he uses his occupation of Stone Court to produce something even more inclusive and widely beneficial: a book. His work on the "Cultivation of Green Crops and the Economy of Cattle Feeding […] won him high congratulations at agricultural meetings" (VIII.finale.779), adding knowledge mediation to the care activities made possible by his literal stewardship.

Significantly, in sharing the fruits of his labors he is joined by Mary, who also publishes an educational work, "Stories of Great Men, taken from Plutarch" (VIII.finale.779). Amusingly, each is mistakenly assumed to be the writer of the other's work (VIII.finale.779). However, the fact that couple's works are so ungendered as to raise such speculations suggests that, through these literary acts of stewardship, the "splitting of love and work that relegates expressive capacities to women while placing instrumental abilities in the masculine domain" has been erased—that true stewardship, while honoring individuality, is a work men and women participate in cooperatively and equally. Thus, culminating in this perfect union of work and love, Fred's narrative demonstrates how adopting the stance of stewardship makes possible the reconciliation of potentially harmful divisions—between individual and community and even male and female—that were transforming Victorians' social, cultural, and even physical landscape.

George Eliot and the Novel: *Middlemarch* as Steward

More than helping Middlemarch transition safely into a new era, George Eliot created her stewards to provide her English readers with models for personal adaptability, growth, and change in a time of intense transition. As Graver writes,

> George Eliot attempted to enlarge the experience of her readers and to alter their perceptions, in part by creating characters who experienced such changes as those she would ideally have her readers undergo, or such failings as might bring her readers to a fuller understanding of the human limitations and social conditions that inhibit the fellowship she wanted her readers to experience as a felt need. (10)

Indeed, the moments in which Eliot speaks directly to her readers as the narrator of her novel indicate that the Middlemarchers are stand-ins for a readership threatened by the same social forces and inflexibility as they. She repeatedly warns her readers against impeding the spirit of stewardship in their midst, writing in her Finale, "we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas," summoning an image of all those whose reforming impulses are hampered by the shortsightedness of their neighbors. "The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts," she gently chides, and "things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been" (VIII.finale.785) without the local but broadly comprehensive care activities of a Fred, a Caleb, or a Dorothea.

By urging her readers to recognize, accept, and, in doing so, even adopt care values themselves, not only Eliot, but the novel itself becomes the ultimate steward. As Fred and Mary's books indicate, it is not unprecedented for Eliot to consider a text capable of care activities. She even allows a local newspaper, the *Trumpet*, to define stewardship and reinforce ethical behavior in its criticism of Mr. Brooke's negligence towards his tenants (IV.xxxviii.359). Novels, too, were active in such "new discursive modes that facilitated transformations of social relations from hierarchy to massification"

(Morris 6); novels, in other words, were both instrumental in mediating the transition from fixed to more portable ideas of belonging and citizenship and had the power to shape the character of those communities through the experience they offered and modeled. As Rae Greiner has recently argued, this experience is one that inherently cultivates "sympathetic habits of mind in readers: structures of consciousness shaped according to sympathetic protocols" (15). The process of reading leads to a sense of "fellow-feeling" (4) that, like Gilligan's process of achieving an ethic of care, requires a recognition of one's separateness and difference before leading us "to feel that we are all […] living in the same, shareable world" (30). Eliot also saw the novel as a vehicle for establishing communities and believed "in the power of art to enlarge the readers' capacities for sympathetic response" (Graver 11), both through the awareness generated by characters' experiences and the mass experience of reading itself. She relied on literature to mediate a social transformation that "would begin with a revolution in individual sensibilities" (10), like the personal conversions of Fred and Dorothea. This process of individual readers "going along with" others' perspectives, as Greiner terms it, and doing so *en masse*, would eventuate in a community based on "affective ties, or the feelings, ideas, and interests that exist apart from fixity of place and social role" (2). Therefore, in Eliot's *Middlemarch*, stewardship not only structures the novel but is the principle through which the novel structures reality.

Chapter Three

The Uses of Stewardship in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*

Mixed Reviews

Though *The Warden* (1855) was Trollope's first successful novel, contemporary critics expressed perplexity over the novel's moral. "Mr. Trollope […] has painted the warden's character with not a little skill. […] But at the same time there is a half-mocking spirit put into the account of John Bold's proceedings […] which will tend to confuse some readers as to Mr. Trollope's real meaning," wrote one anonymous reviewer for the *Examiner* (Smalley 31). He concludes, "It is not, on the whole, so clearly put as it should be, if the book be meant for a didactic novel" (31). "A *moral* is wanting," complained another critic for the *Eclectic Review*. "It would have been a better, a wiser, and certainly a more useful course," he opines, "to have shown how such funds might have administered to the comfort and well-being of a much larger number of aged men" (39). Sure that Trollope's purpose was, like the newspaper featured in his novel, to act as his readers' conscience and definitively judge and reform the institutions he portrayed, many of his reviewers found *The Warden* "unsatisfactory" (30).

Trollope himself expressed dissatisfaction with the result of his novel on the same grounds. In his autobiography, he explains his inspiration for *The Warden*:

> I had been struck by two opposite evils. […] I thought that I might be able to expose them, or rather to describe them, both in one and the same tale. The first evil was the possession by the Church of certain funds and endowments which had been intended for charitable purposes, but which had been allowed to become incomes for idle Church dignitaries. […] The second evil was its very opposite. […] I had also often been angered by the undeserved severity of the newspapers towards the recipients of such incomes, who could hardly be considered to be the chief sinners in the matter. (*AA* 79)

Looking back, he claims, he realizes that he "was altogether wrong in supposing that the two things could be combined" (79). His assertion that the book was an artistic failure because he did not advocate strongly for one side by painting the other as morally reprehensible, however, is clearly disingenuous. It was never Trollope's intention make policy recommendations or even to take a side in the debate about the disposition of Church funds; this, to him, seemed dishonest (80). Rather, Trollope implies that his greatest concern lay in how the positions in the debate were expressed, not in the positions themselves: "I felt that there had been some tearing to pieces which might have been spared" (79), he explains, and later adds, "certain writers of the press had allowed themselves to use language which was cruel, though it was in a good cause" (80). The purpose of *The Warden* seems not to have been to make a moral judgment and expose some great institutionalized social evil, but to describe the discursive strategies by which morality is constituted.

Like the critics of Trollope's day, literary scholars writing about *The Warden* tend to focus on the dispute surrounding John Hiram's will, tracing its historical basis (e.g., Best), hypothesizing on Trollope's own position by examining his religious and political tendencies (e.g., Pollard, Durey), and analyzing the warden Mr. Harding's role as a representation of Trollope in mediating the dispute to reconcile past and present, institution and reform (e.g., Hawkins). Though some have noticed Trollope's reticence to take sides (e.g., Hawkins), few have discussed Trollope's interest in the terms and language of the debate, suggesting instead that Trollope was offering a compromise between the combatants, as befitted the novel's context in the "age of equipoise" (e.g., Goldberg). In his discussion of Trollope's parody of "a Dickens novel Dickens never actually wrote" (Meckier 202), Jerome Meckier begins to explore the rhetorical means rather than the matter of the debate, claiming that "Trollope writes *The Warden* to

compare his own evenhanded treatment of an alleged crime against the poor with the melodramatic overstatement he thinks Dickens would have made of it" (203), thereby "stipulat[ing] the appropriate manner for dealing with [current affairs of the Charterhouse variety] in fiction" (204). Meckier's discussion is limited to a comparison of the satirical strategies of understatement and overstatement employed by Trollope and Dickens, respectively, but the ethics of debate are addressed more broadly in Bo Earle's "Policing and Performing Liberal Individuality in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*," which examines more closely the novel's internal commentary on the process and effect of the act of deliberation. Centering his argument on Mr. Harding's experience first as warden and then in his new identity as precentor, Earle describes the de-individuating effects of the press's "abstract lambasting" of Harding (Earle 7), Harding's awakening from the "self-induced oblivion of hegemonic morality" (31), and the implications for liberal identity formation of his insistence not to be "proved right," but to "be right." Though Earle suggests that the novel narrates the use and dismissal of the Socratic model of deliberation through which "right" is hegemonically established, this chapter argues that the constitution of "right," whether through deliberation or performance, is based on a premise that subordinates right to another rhetorically potent value: care.

Indeed, literary critics have not yet provided a holistic description of how *The Warden* is a product of Trollope's desire to mediate not the outcome of a national debate, but the postures of the controversy's participants and, therefore, the relationships among the debaters. I propose that such a description can be offered by observing that the governing discourse of Trollope's *The Warden* is that of stewardship. The actions, reactions, judgments made, and arguments used in the debate about whether the warden of Hiram's hospital is entitled to receive the proceeds of the land left by John Hiram for the support of the hospital are all based on the underlying assumption that a certain

course of action is more ethical because it entails the responsible disposition of resources by a disinterested entity on behalf of and for the benefit of a certain relevant community. The action of the novel is an exploration of how stewardship as a concept is used to justify multiple, sometimes conflicting personal and political positions and demonstrates the potency and fluidity of stewardship discourse in the Victorian context. In other words, it reveals that despite the growing valorization of rational individualism and demand for individual rights, legitimate personal and institutional decisions and actions could still be judged based on the ethic of care and sense of responsibility they demonstrated. As Trollope shows, even rights-based or self-interested demands could be made and legitimated through stewardship. For example, in *The Warden*, the Anglican Church claims that it is a steward responsible for preserving values that are made available to the community only through aesthetic experiences with Church property. The aestheticization of Church property allows the Church to claim that its expenditures are an act of stewardship benefitting the nation and individuals but allows the Church to defend its own privileges and obscure its responsibility to recognize others' rights.

Though Trollope supports Church reform and rejects Church property as a legitimate basis for community, his novel acknowledges the important role the unreformed Church played in English social and political life, especially in defining English community and identity. Since the goal of stewardship, as discussed in Chapter One, is to ensure the survival of sympathetic community relations, Trollope's exposure of the use of stewardship to mask the absence of actual stewardship points to a longing for and absence of an entity that can replace the Church in that role. The Church's secular parallel in the novel, the newspaper the *Jupiter*, is the best candidate. However, it commits the same sins as the Church of England: its articles criticize the Church on the basis of stewardship principles, accusing the clergy of misappropriating charitable funds,

but do so with the veiled intent of consolidating the power of individuals like the journalist Tom Towers. The ability of newspapers to form communities by inculcating English citizens with a set of shared beliefs makes it essential that newspapers adopt instead the ethical principles implied in stewardship: responsible disposition of resources, accountability, and concern for the parties it mediates between rather than seeking to benefit themselves. Trollope's depiction of the social disintegration prompted by the newspaper's "ownership" stance warns that if its power continues to be used unwisely, the newspapers will perpetuate entitled, unsympathetic, and polarizing habits of thought. His own novel, with its determined moral ambiguity and allowance for the coexistence of multiple perspectives, models the harmonious accommodation of individual difference Trollope hopes to inculcate in the organs most responsible for shaping public opinion and creating, without recourse to property, the Englishness threatened by Church reform.

The Reform of the Church of England

Though portraying a Church whose social, political, and even religious cachet was, in the present, waning, *The Warden* and others of Trollope's works reflect on a past when the Church of England and its representatives had performed similar functions to the estate steward, both in terms of property management and the mediation of social relationships. Throughout the century, the Anglican Church controlled an impressive portion of the nation's wealth. In addition to revenues from tithes, pew rents, offertories, private voluntary donations, and fees for performing ceremonies like marriages, the Church had extensive real estate holdings. One author estimated in 1877 that the Church owned 150,000 acres of glebe and tithe land (Martin 104) and that the landed endowments of bishops, deans, and canons amounted to 92,248 acres (70). As an institution, the Church had a serious religious obligation to manage this wealth as a good

steward. Susan E. Colón issues the reminder that "the Bible retained a strong cultural and religious currency and even authority in Victorian Britain" (21), and Biblical parables on stewardship were "part of the received cultural lexicon" (2).[44] Among the most frequently analyzed of the stewardship parables was the parable of "The Entrusted Talents," as Reverend William Arnot referred to it in his popular *The Parables of Our Lord* (1865). In this parable, which is recorded in the book of Matthew, a master preparing to leave on a long journey delivers into the hands of three servants his "goods": "And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey" (Matt. 25:15).[45] The servants who receive five and two talents double their talents before their lord's return. The third servant, however, buries his and has only the single talent to present to his returned master. The lord praises and rewards the first two servants, but punishes the third, stating, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness" (Matt. 25:30).

Interpretations of this parable emphasized the implied obligations placed on special entities like the Church. In his widely read work, *The Stewardship of Life, or Studies of the Parables of the Talents* (1873), James Stirling taught that "the subject of the parable [of the entrusted talents] is the Kingdom of Heaven" (5), by which is meant

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[44] The paradigm of stewardship proposed by Biblical stewards also informed the care values expressed in texts written for professional stewards. Nathaniel Kent, for example, frequently made Christian allusions in his *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (1775). In a discussion of the steward's treatment of cottagers, he references the Golden Rule, stating that his proposal for protecting cottagers from extortion "would be dealing with the poor as we would wish to be dealt with ourselves, in a similar situation" (213). More overtly, John Cowper criticized Edward Laurence's steward manual for forsaking Christian principles: "Is not this telling us," he writes of one passage, "that a trusty Steward ought to be divested of all Humanity? That he must be zealous to take Advantage of the Weakness, the Misfortunes, the Distress, the Necessity of the poor Freeholders…in order to promote the separate interest of his wealthy Lord? Sure Christianity teaches us better Things! Christianity teaches us Compassion and universal Benevolence; and not to watch, to seek for, and to take all Opportunities of supplanting and ruining the Poor" (17-18). Cowper's identification as unchristian the steward's failure to reconcile the interests of the parties between which he is mediating so that neither is harmed demonstrates that the care activities associated with stewardship often had deeply religious resonances.

[45] All references are to the King James Version of the Bible.

"the Christian Church" (6). Importantly, he anthropomorphizes the Church as a believing individual, stating that "the life of the Christian Church is a Christian life" (12), and declares that the Church was entrusted with its talents when the departing master, Jesus Christ, left the earth. Among the talents Stirling refers to are, of course, the church's spiritual responsibilities (3). However, he does not seem to limit the church to a merely spiritual stewardship.[46] "Now what talent is yet withheld from the Church?" he asks (18), evidently referring to the political power and financial resources that had long magnified the church's scope and influence. These worldly "talents" were no less subject to the principle of stewardship than the Church's spiritual gifts. Colón confirms, "Most [commentators] considered that the talents represented spiritual and material goods" (104). The secular interpretation of parables like "The Entrusted Talents" meant that the church was under an obligation to use its "goods […] to serve and benefit others" (Colón 105).

Overseeing the Church's disposition of property and acting as stewards in their own right were clergymen at many levels of the Church hierarchy.[47] Archdeacons, for

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[46] Charitable practices in the Church of England continue to be referred to by the term "stewardship." The Church of England's website has a section entitled "Funding the Church of England." Among the subtopics under this heading is "Giving and Christian Stewardship." The article reads, "Being good stewards requires us to decide what we will do with all that God has entrusted to us. The familiar offertory response 'All things come from you, and of your own do we give you' reminds us that all that we have is sourced from God's provision. We are encouraged to give of time, skills and money to support the work of the church and that of other charities that build God's kingdom. Much of this giving may be regular giving from our income, but we should also consider what we will do with the wealth that we accumulate" (par. 1-2).

[47] The stewarding functions of these men also included the social aspects discussed primarily in Chapter One. Archdeacons acted as mediators, providing the bishop with "a constant flow of information about the parochial life of the diocese, and the conduct of the clergy, as well as conveying the views of the bishops to clergy and churchwardens in the parishes" (Knight 173). In general, the gentleman clergyman that appears in Trollope's Barsetshire Chronicles was optimally positioned to perform both the social and financial mediations required of a steward. He was often a node in a system for gathering tithes and distributing welfare. Moreover, as a gentleman, he was sometimes the most educated person in the community, and his local presence made him ideal for communicating knowledge and adapting change to suit the local conditions. Such clergymen were also essential to reconciling conflicts of belief and interest between Anglicans and Dissenters (73, 116), seeking compromises that would allow the two to peacefully coexist in the parish (79).

example, were tasked with visiting parishes to inspect churches and order repairs, thereby directing much of the church's expenditure (Knight 171). Local clergy were expected to make these repairs, even to their own homes, which they essentially held in trust for any other clergyman who may inherit the living. These tasks had greater significance, however, than keeping worshipers snug and dry. The parish church was central to local communities, often functioning as a place for public meetings and other social activities in addition to religious worship. Like the common lands of earlier days, it was essentially community property.

As with the relationship between land and landscape, however, what a church building's materials, architecture, and location *represented* to such communities was as significant as the activities these features accommodated: "stability in a changing world," a community's history and values, and a past characterized by religious unity (Knight 62) were all conveyed to locals by the homely aspect of their church. Its ability to create continuity with the past, and especially with a past associated with the "orderly, God-fearing society" Victorians felt they were losing (61), made the local parish church "an emphatic statement about the integrity of the past in a landscape at risk from being scarred by industrial debris" (62). It is unsurprising, therefore, that as the pace of industrialization quickened, so too did the perceived need for churches. A society established to fund the expansion and construction of churches prided itself on having "contributed in an essential manner to promote the social peace and political welfare of our Country" (65). The Church's institutions clearly had a cultural and moral function even for those who did not ascribe to Anglican doctrines; they bespoke the character of an English community and suggested the stability and accessibility of such a community. The investment of Church funds in building, repairing, and beautifying ecclesiastical

landscapes and landscape-like objects such as churches was therefore considered by the Church as a legitimate duty of stewardship.

Clearly, its intimate connection with the daily lived experience of the English people had made the Church a principle definer and shaper of English life. The early nineteenth-century observer would not have been able to deny, as Kenneth Thompson says, "the Church's usefulness to society, especially in maintaining social control and stability" (qtd. in Knight 12). As a fundamental element of the pre-reform social order, the Church represented, created, and maintained local and national communities by offering a matrix of beliefs, rituals, and recognizable social identities and relationships. In fact, as a national and ubiquitously local institution, it shaped the lives even of those who could not in good conscience swear to the 39 Articles. The Anglican clergy, for example, were considered to have a "supervisory" role over their entire parish (Knight 1), which meant that non-churchgoers and those who identified with Dissenters were included within their "cure of souls." Moreover, many Nonconformists continued to rely on Anglican clergy to perform their marriages, baptisms, and burials (Knight 86). Historian J. C. D. Clark's revisionist history of the period between the Restoration and the passing of the first Reform Act suggests why the Church held such social and psychological influence. In *English Society 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics During the Ancien Regime* (2000),[48] Clark argues that the constitution that emerged after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 secured the rights and privileges of the English Church and cemented a social order headed by the Church, the monarchy, and the aristocracy. So naturalized did this arrangement become that in 1829, Tories such as John Scott Eldon

[48] The first edition published in 1985 was titled *English Society 1688-1832*. Clark's rationale for including the additional 28 years in the second edition was that "since we now see far more clearly that the Revolution was not the Lockeian moment it was once thought to be, the framing of a liberal-contractarian consensus, we must seek the origins of the continuum in the Restoration" (x).

were arguing that "the Church of England, combined with the State, formed together the constitution of Great Britain" (Clark 532). Part of the Church's stewardship, then, included the political fate of English people.

However, by the 1830s, contemporary churchman R. W. Church attested that the Church "had sunk into worldliness and torpor" (Knight 7), a laxness that compromised both its "temporal and spiritual authority" (7). Calls for reform were made that highlighted the Church's misuse of funds and property—its failure to abide the principles of stewardship. For example, the poverty of curates and other lower clergymen and the relative wealth and ease of the higher clergy drew extensive criticism. Trollope himself satirized the inequitable conditions in the Church in his *Clergymen of the Church of England* (1866): "The idea of comparing the work done with the payment given for the work would be horrible to the imagination of every beneficed clergyman in the Church of England," he writes in a sketch of "The Curate in a Populous Parish." Despite being overworked and underpaid, "No clergyman in our Church has, as yet, taken it into his head that there should be any analogy, or any proportion, between work and wages in his profession, as there is such analogy and such proportion in all other professions" (93-94). The practice of plurality, in which a clergyman held and received income from more than one living, drew similar criticisms. Some clergymen had to take more than one living to survive but were unable to meet the associated parish obligations; others took advantage of plurality to enjoy the income from sinecures while a curate performed all of their ecclesiastical duties.

To rectify what many saw as corruption and mismanagement in the Church's temporal affairs, the Ecclesiastical Commission was organized in 1835 by Sir Robert Peel's government. Originally comprising seven politicians and five bishops, the Commission's purpose was "to produce reports for improving the state of the Church"

(Knight 11). The Commission itself was an outgrowth of the "suggestion that the Church's capitular, collegiate, and episcopal property would be more efficiently managed" by a board of religious and secular representatives (151) than by high church officials alone. In its efforts to establish itself as a better steward of the Church's resources, the commission introduced "radical changes to the rules on residence and pluralities, and on cathedral finance" (152) that were meant to alleviate the hardships endured by impoverished clergymen and bolster the Church's ethos through responsible management. Furthermore, the redistricting called for by the Reform Act of 1832 was reenacted in the redistribution of clerical livings and redrawing of diocesan boundaries in the same decade. Over the course of the century, these changes, premised on the principle of "good stewardship" as defined by a post-Reform Bill social order, gradually and irreversibly restructured clerical, parish, and national life.

Competing Stewardships

Though in George Eliot's words Trollope was "a Church of England man" (qtd. in Mayne xii), he actively participated in the exposure of what he deemed the injustices perpetuated by the Church. His collection of sketches, *Clergymen of the Church of England* (1866), satirizes the corruptions of the Church in a series of portraits of figures such as "The Modern English Archbishop" and "The Parson of the Parish." He was particularly unsparing on topics such as the impoverished circumstances of the lower clergy, for which he was rebuked by the Church's organ, *The Guardian*, which claimed that he was "endors[ing] a popular error" (Mayne xv). Nevertheless, the moral flavor of his criticisms is derived from the principles of stewardship the Church itself preached allegiance to while echoing the stewardship language of the reform effort, offering an

initial glimpse into the competing uses of stewardship that surface in *The Warden*. For example, as if to test whether the bishop has been a wise steward, Trollope laments,

> Would that it were possible to enforce upon the bishops, as a part of their duty the task of furnishing annually a statistical return which should show what proportion of the clerical duties in their dioceses was done by curates, and what proportion by other clergymen; and also what payment had been made to the curates for the work so done, and what payment to those who were not curates. […] Then if we could see […] what amount of the payment received could be justly appropriated to each task performed, we should have some clear idea of the manner in which the revenues of the Church are divided among those who do the work of the Church. (*CCE* 92-93)

Unlike the Biblical steward whose faithfulness was manifest in his dutiful distribution to the members of the master's household "their portion of meat in due season" (Luke 12:42), Trollope implies that the bishop has not been fair or attentive to the Church's dependents in his position as a "[custodian] of the vast wealth and influence of the most richly endowed social institution in the country" (Skilton xii). Moreover, Trollope's demand for a specific accounting of the distribution of Church funds is an echo of the lord's accountings with each of his three stewards in the parable of the talents. By imagining a scrutinizing "we" in the place of the master, Trollope both undercuts the Church's claims to stewardship and makes the Church itself accountable to an earthly tribunal.

In his sketch on "English Bishops Old and New," Trollope suggests that this "we" is constituted by the English public. Noting the transformation of the bishop into a working man, he remarks, "'No doubt the increased industry of the bishops has come, as has the increased industry of public officers, from the demand of the people whom they are called upon to serve" (*CCE* 24-25). Interestingly, Trollope associates Church reform with the movement for parliamentary reform, making the Church subject to the same expectations of public responsibility—proper stewardship of a public trust. Though

Trollope ironically exclaims, "it is singular that bishops should not before this have been enlightened on the subject […] by the voice of the laity whom they serve" (30), it was a relatively new phenomenon for the Church to be held responsible to a nation of politically empowered laypeople. It was the Church that had previously established the terms of political participation (even dissenters were not admitted to Parliament until 1828 [Knight 1]), and it had then been answerable to no one but God, whose will the Church itself interpreted. Clark argues that this situation remained largely unchanged until the passing of the controversial Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829—which granted civil liberties to Catholics and loosened the Anglican Church's monopoly of many English institutions— precipitated the parliamentary reforms that resulted in the 1832 and subsequent Reform Bills (Clark 549) and resulted in the increased sense of individual self-efficacy that allowed a public "we" to establish itself as an arbiter of institutional behavior.

Criticisms against the Church therefore arose not only because it was violating expectations it had upheld for its own conduct but because the spirit of reform itself, as the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Commission demonstrates, adopted a stewardship ethos.[49] Arguing against the Reform Bill in 1831, Eldon asked, "Is it possible for any man to have the boldness to say that property is secure, when we are sweeping away near one hundred boroughs, and almost all the corporations in the country, because we have a notion that those who are connected with them have not executed their trust properly?" (qtd. in Clark 543). Eldon's use of the word "trust" to describe that which the

[49] Apropos of this reversal, the very nature of a parable is to subvert the cultural practices and institutions that give it context and legitimacy. Jesus's parables, after all, "drew on the Hebrew scriptural tradition" of which they were a product and through which they gained meaning "to attack […] the prevailing religious and ethical norms of his day" (Colón 2-3). Similarly, stewardship parables in Victorian England exposed as corruption and spiritual bankruptcy the long-accepted practices of the institution from whose pulpits those parables were taught.

government's representatives had previously administered implies that the justification for parliamentary reform given by his opponents was the need to ensure and make provision for better stewardship, one premised on responsibility to the English voter. Eldon's fear that "this new doctrine affects every species of property which any man possesses in this country" (Clark 543) extended to Church property, which many believed had become a bastion of property-based privilege.

Interestingly, as Trollope's passage on the bishop suggests, the accusations of selfishness, mismanagement, and corruption leveled at the Anglican Church's disposition of its property were convincing because of their ability to invoke the strong tradition of religious stewardship, which was easily manipulated to accommodate the valorization of "rational individualism" and the proposal that the Church's responsibility was to a new "public good." The effects of religious stewardship are premised on the fact that Christianity demands proper stewardship from all professing believers. Arnot was not the only Victorian commentator who, in his disquisition on the entrusted talents, concluded, "The delivery of the master's goods to these servants intimates that the Lord gives to every member of the visible Church all his faculties and opportunities" (Arnot 301) and that "He who has bestowed them expects that we shall diligently improve them" (304). Arnot's interpretation suggests that every individual has, by virtue of being given life, skills, and means, been given a responsibility or stewardship over those very gifts. This sense of responsibility to God broadened the application of stewardship in the Victorian imagination to every conceivable form of property and democratized stewardship as a practice. It was also seen as endorsing the spirit of individualism that stoked the fires of reform. For example, the master's approval of faithful stewards who increase their original stewardship "was read by Victorian commentators as *underwriting* capitalism: God expects his followers to increase their financial holdings by hard work, reasonable

risk, and thrift" (Colón 105, emphasis added). Stewardship could be used to temper individualistic endeavors like capitalist enterprise[50] with a sense of responsibility and service that made the Church's amassing of wealth reprehensible and led political agents to consider it within their purview to demand change. It is therefore unsurprising that Eldon predicted that the stewardship approach to property would lead to the destruction of the monarchy and the empowerment of the populace through measures like universal suffrage (Clark 543), that entities whose entrenched power was derived from property would be dislodged if the public deemed that their use of property did not reflect a sense of responsibility to the public good. Indeed, as property holders became more general and more confident in the privileges property granted them, institutions like the Church were increasingly hard-pressed to legitimize their own property-based claims to authority.

Nevertheless, the Church's rhetorical strategy in *The Warden* represents an attempt to do just that. The Church's unlimited exercise of the rights and privileges of property ownership, especially its ability to dispose of its property for its own benefit—is threatened early in the novel by the reformer John Bold's quest to bring justice to the poor of Barchester. At issue is the true intention of the will left by one John Hiram, an ancient inhabitant of the cathedral town who established a hospital for old men who could no longer support themselves by their labors. To finance this hospital, Hiram also left land, the proceeds of which were to be used to give the bedesmen of the hospital an allowance and pay the hospital's warden. This warden should also be the precentor of the

[50] As Colón points out, this is capitalism in a different mode that is best illustrated through the parable of the wise steward found in Luke 12, which contrasts the behavior of bad and good stewards. The foolish steward is described as one who thinks, "My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken" (Luke 12:45). The faithful steward, however, continues to "give [the members of the household] their portion of meat in due season" until the master returns (Luke 12:42-44). Unlike his foil the foolish steward, the wise steward does not "appropriate to himself the resources" of his master's house but remembers that they have been "provided by the master for the benefit of all" and uses them to serve those over whom he has responsibility (Colón 104).

cathedral, if the bishop approved (*W* I.3). Over time, the increasing profits from the land left by John Hiram were used to supplement the warden's income, while the allowance of the bedesmen remained essentially unchanged (I.6). Bold and those who take up his cause claim that the excess profits derived from the land are being unlawfully absorbed by the warden when by rights they should be given directly to the bedesmen.

The Church representatives, especially Archdeacon Grantly, the warden Mr. Harding's son-in-law, are chagrined by the implied and even overt accusations of greed and indifference manifest in the assertions of politicians "that the grasping priests of the Church of England are gorged with the wealth which the charity of former times has left for the solace of the aged, or the education of the young" (II.10). However, the Church is more preoccupied by the blow such accusations make to its entrenched power and is primarily focused, not on seeing justice done, but on preserving and consolidating its own rights and privileges. Archdeacon Grantly exemplifies this attitude as he states, "They are church revenues: the laity admit it. Surely the church is able to administer her own revenues" (II.21). Dr. Grantly emphasizes principles of ownership and exclusion by implying that once the Church has obtained money through any of its various means, it is not answerable to anyone for how it is distributed. He publicly defends the warden of St. Cross[51] by arguing "that the manners of the present time do not admit of literal adhesion to the very words of the founder's will, but that the interests of the church for which the founder was so deeply concerned are best consulted in enabling its bishops to reward those shining lights whose services have been most signally serviceable to Christianity" (II.11). Those who identify with the Church in the novel are clearly invested in an institution that is self-sufficient, privileged, and unaccountable to external entities.

[51] The case of St. Cross was one of the incidents that *The Warden* was based on. Like Mr. Harding, the Earl of Guilford was accused of amassing an enormous sum through his position as warden of the hospital at St. Cross.

Such arguments are, however, accompanied by a more sublimated strain of rhetoric that defends the Church's right to maintain control over the disposition of its wealth through the aestheticization of its property. For example, the Archdeacon justifies his defense of the Church's rights to himself as he experiences the aesthetic affects of ecclesiastical environs: "As he walked across the hallowed close, and looked up at the ravens who cawed with a peculiar reverence as wended his way, he thought with increased acerbity of those whose impiety would venture to disturb the goodly grace of cathedral institutions" (V.57). This process of aestheticization, though exclusionary in practice, nevertheless allows the church to create the illusion that its spending practices are those of a good steward preserving the basis of disappearing community relations and therefore serving the "public good." James S. and Nancy G. Duncan discuss this phenomenon in their article, "The Aestheticization of the Politics of Landscape Preservation." They point out that aestheticizing landscapes obscures the actual power structures and production practices that gave rise to their existence, allowing lands to become, not legally but discursively, "possessions for those with the wealth and power to control them" (387). The preservation of "natural", "beautiful", or "local" landscapes is then justified by their status as a retreat from the modern developments they apparently offer an alternative to: "the perceived impersonality of modern mass society" and "the psychologically unsettling processes by which social relations are increasingly disembedded and reconnected into complex and heterogeneous networks of abstract social and economic relations" (Duncan & Duncan 387), phenomena Victorians were beginning to experience. The claim that such landscapes counter these processes by becoming reserves of "collective memories, narratives of community, […] traditions" (390) is certainly echoed in the nostalgia with which ecclesiastical landscapes and other aestheticized Church institutions are treated in *The Warden*.

This strategy of aestheticization is encapsulated by Trollope in the term "picturesque." This concept is one of the primary themes of his *Clergymen of the Church of England*, which chronicles the changes wrought by reform on the Church: "In seeking the useful," he sighs, "we are compelled to abandon the picturesque" (*CCE* 28). His somewhat ironic lament for the "picturesque" seems to encompass both landscape and anything else with similar representative value: "Our lanes and hedgerows and green commons are all going; and the graceful dignity of the old bishop is a thing of the past" (28), Trollope observes, applying the concept of the picturesque to Church figureheads. He applies it frequently to Church buildings as well, especially in *The Warden*. After noting the Archdeacon's frame of mind as he crosses the "hallowed close," Trollope's narrator indulges in a monologue ironically validating the Church's investment in aesthetics:

> We believe that Mr. Horseman himself would relent, and the spirit of Sir Benjamin Hall would give way, were those great reformers to allow themselves to stroll by moonlight round the towers of some of our ancient churches. […] Who could be hard upon a dean while wandering round the sweet close of Hereford, and owning that in that precinct, tone and colour, design and form, solemn tower and storied window, are all in unison, and all perfect! Who could lie basking in the cloisters of Salisbury, and gaze on Jewel's library and that unequalled spire, without feeling that bishops should sometimes be rich! (*W* V.58)

The implied argument of men like Archdeacon Grantly, whose thought process this passage is written to reflect,[52] is that the church spires and stained glass windows, the stonework, the very mien of ecclesiastical buildings allow the viewer to access an emotional life that exceeds in value and therefore excuses the expense necessary to create such magnificence. The shared experience of such beauty, this argument suggests, permits even antagonists to enter sympathetically into the feelings of their rivals, to see

[52] The narrator follows this paragraph with "The tone of our archdeacon's mind must not astonish us" (*W* V.58).

things from another's perspective, creating the possibility of a sympathetic community—one wholly converted to upholding the rights and privileges of the Church.

Trollope's ironically nostalgic tone makes the reader aware that this strategy has some emotional validity that should nevertheless be scrutinized and its appeal resisted. This warning is clearer in his *Clergymen of the Church of England* essay on "The Normal Dean of the Present Day," in which the fulfillment of emotional but not actual needs by Church functionaries and edifices is more overtly made the butt of a joke. Trollope submits that there are few who would be able to describe what a dean actually does (*CCE* 31), proposing that their primary function seems to have been to give "increased flavour of ecclesiastical excellence" to cathedral services by lending them "the weight of his presence and the grace of his rank" (31-32). In the current day of more utilitarian churches designed to provide services that actually teach people how to live Christian lives (32), Trollope comments that the dean's role is practically obsolete. Nevertheless, deans and their institutions are kept from becoming extinct by little more than a foolish nostalgia. This is suggested by the Englishman's fondness for (and complete ignorance of the purpose of) the chapter house, which it was one of the dean's duties to maintain and in which the dean of former days met with chapter dignitaries:

> When we visit our ancient cathedrals, and are taken into a handsome but manifestly useless octagonal stone outhouse, we are delighted to find that the chapter-house is being repaired at an expense of, say, four thousand pounds […]; or if we find the said outhouse to be in ruins, […] we feel a keen regret as though all things good were going from us. That there should be a chapter-house attached to the cathedral, simply because a chapter-house was needed in former days, is all the reason that we can give for our affection. (35)

Perhaps the most concerning aspect of the phenomenon described in this passage is the complete suspension of critical thought that results from the purely emotional response Trollope describes—a response elicited by the aestheticization of Church property. The

focus on the building's embodiment of tradition, which is evidently only possible when it appears untouched by the passage of time, makes the viewer heedless of the effort and expense needed to maintain that timelessness and certainly inspires no investigations into the wisdom of using the money for other purposes. Trollope's observation of this and similar phenomena with regard to Church of England property and officials evidences the effectiveness—and therefore the danger—of the aestheticization of Church property.

Indeed, the inequalities in the disposal of Church income in *The Warden*, though actively defended by men like Dr. Grantly, are easily perpetuated because of a similar suspension of critical thought among those supposed to operate as stewards of Church funds, a suspension resulting from a traditional and unexamined belief in the necessity of church property's familiar aesthetic features to represent and sustain a specific social structure and community ethos. Two men with parallel roles act the part of these stewards in Trollope's novel: the bishop of Barchester's steward, Mr. Chadwick, and the warden of Hiram's hospital, Mr. Harding. Trollope explains the details of these men's roles and their association with each other: certain lands left by John Hiram are rented to local farmers, who cultivate them and pay rents to Mr. Chadwick. Mr. Chadwick then delivers these rents to the hospital's warden, who first pays the bedesmen that which is required by Hiram's will, keeping the remainder for himself (*W* I.5). These men's primary fault, as Trollope describes it in his autobiography, is a certain thoughtlessness that is the result, no doubt, of "the growth of centuries of church ascendency" (V.58)—an unconscious inheritance of and consequently the inability to recognize one's own privilege: "When a man is appointed to a place, it is natural that he should accept the income allotted to that place without much inquiry. It is seldom that he will be the first to find out that his

services are overpaid" (*AA* 79).[53] Indeed, Mr. Chadwick's heritage, identity, and future are defined by this particular administration of these particular properties. His father and grandfather had filled the same role and had "lived comfortably, maintained a good house, and held a high position in Barchester society. The present Mr. Chadwick was a worthy scion of a worthy stock, and the tenants living on the butts and patches, as well as those wide episcopal domains of the see, were well pleased to have to do with so worthy and liberal a steward" (*W* I.5). Entrenched in the privilege of his position, Mr. Chadwick is resistant to even modest changes in the financial arrangements of the hospital (I.7), which could displace him from his own societal position and disrupt the apparent harmony otherwise achieved by maintaining the status quo.

Mr. Harding, too, is the inheritor of financial practices he is not even aware enough of to question. Historically, the income left over after paying the bedesmen their allowance had been used to beautify the house attached to the hospital and currently provides a comfortable income (I.5-6). Unsurprisingly, Mr. Harding's disinclination to examine his position is intimately associated with his aestheticized experiences of the house, hospital, and cathedral he has been long accustomed to live and serve in and that to him bespeak the "collective memories" and "narratives of community" constructed through the aestheticization process. Hiram's hospital has been associated with "harmony" since the days when its original founder gave the cathedral precentor the option of being warden (I.3).[54] Indeed, the hospital is in many ways still the medieval

[53] The Bishop of Barchester is also guilty of assenting to economic injustice because of a vague, unexamined loyalty to tradition. In responding to Mr. Harding's concerns about his right to his income, "He said something about tradition; more of the many learned men who by their practice had confirmed the present arrangement; then went at some length into the propriety of maintaining the due difference in rank and income between a beneficed clergyman and certain poor old men who were dependent on charity; and concluded his argument by another reference to the archdeacon" (III.39).

[54] Because the precentor's duty is to chant the litany, he is associated with musical harmony. In "Mr. Harding's Church Music," Sherman Hawkins explains how the metaphor of music in *The Warden* represents the establishment of social harmony.

institution founded by John Hiram, representing in miniature the quasi-utopian, unified community of caring relationships that was nostalgized by Victorians. The hospital's twelve bedesmen are lovingly cared for by their warden in a "picturesque" building with pleasing, balanced features and a sense of order in every detail, from its pairs of windows, each "separated by a small buttress" to its "broad gravel walk […] between the building and the river, which is always trim and well cared for" (I.7). To its warden and its residents, the hospital represents the maintenance of a lifestyle defined by relationship. Mr. Bunce, the unofficial leader of the bedesmen, considers the hospital his "happy home" because he "had had honour there, and friendship; he had recognized his master, and been recognized" (XX.277). Similarly, in Mr. Harding's imagination, the greatest pleasures of his life are evoked both by the Church buildings that have shaped his experiences and the relationships and obligations they represent: "All manner of past delights came before his mind […]; his pleasant shady home, those twelve old neighbours whose welfare till now had been the source of so much pleasant care, […] the friendship of the dear old bishop, the solemn grandeur of those vaulted aisles [of Barchester cathedral], through which he loved to hear his own voice pealing" (X.131-132). However, just as the gardener who trims the grass is never seen, the harmoniousness represented in the architecture, though expressing to some the moral orderliness of the social life the hospital sustains, creates a sense of wellbeing that obscures the economic inequalities that define the relationships experienced by those within the hospital.

Hints of this economic separation are also built directly into the hospital architecture, though they are obscured by the building's aesthetic unity. The narrator tells us that "On passing through this portal [the entrance to the hospital], […] the six doors of the old men's abodes are seen, and beyond them is a slight iron screen, through which the more happy portion of the Barchester elite pass into the Elysium of Mr. Harding's

dwelling" (I.8). Mr. Harding is, however, entirely unaware of how the economic inequalities that maintain the paradisiacal "air" of his own home, separated from absolute contact with poverty by a delicate blinder, shape his associations. The narrator makes a point to mention that Mr. Harding is not "quite easy in money matters" and is content to allow his son-in-law, the archdeacon, to manage his "pecuniary affairs" (I.9). Just as he left to others to count the cost of his "much-laboured and much-loved volume of church music, which had cost so many guineas" (III.28), complete with "vellum and gilding" (I.9), Mr. Harding does not consider the economic arrangements that make his home and the hospital so beautiful and "has never felt any compunction as to receiving his quarterly sum of two hundred pounds" (II.11). The action of the novel chronicles Mr. Harding's awakening to the possibility that the Church's moral claims to direct the use of funds it does not legally[55] have an overt right to are illegitimate. He begins to realize that, instead of performing a public good, the Church's "stewardship" of Hiram's property maintains unequal power structures designed to buttress its own authority and privilege.

Mr. Harding's awakening is produced by encounters with arguments also premised on stewardship that reveal the potential illegitimacy of the Church's claims. Arguments undermining the Church's aestheticization strategy could in fact be found in the Victorian press. One writer, for example, not at all under the enchantment experienced by Mr. Harding, was appalled at how much money the Church budgeted to build, restore, and expand churches. Frederick Martin paraphrased the writer's dismay: "The only results of this annual expenditure of a million sterling has been, says the

[55] Recourse to legal counsel is taken by both sides in the controversy. The Church consults Sir Abraham Haphazard, who advises that no matter against whom the opposition takes legal action, an argument can be made that responsibility lies elsewhere. Their legal strategy is not to prove that they have right to the funds, but to drive up legal costs until the opposition gives up (VIII.106-107). The reformers take a consensus approach, persuading the bedesmen to sign a petition claiming they have been wronged. Neither side can prove the "right" of the matter, and the determination of right is therefore made a matter of who exercises the most powerful rhetoric and through what means.

Times, to set up, among 'miserably paid clergymen,' and 'populations miserably provided for,' a 'landscape adorned with magnificent churches, surpassing one another in all that art and material can do for them'" (101).[56] The writer's conclusion that "The whole is 'the rank soil of the wildest and most selfish extravagance'" (101) explodes the Church's claim that there is an intangible, affective value in such a landscape that justifies its expenditures. Indeed, it implies that the Church is failing in its true responsibility and stewardship to care for the temporal needs of its clergy and the poor, disregarding the affective potential of ecclesiastical landscapes.

It is on such grounds that the reformers in *The Warden* also view Mr. Harding's relative affluence and the bedesmen's relative poverty to be the product of bad stewardship. They are concerned not with the abstract value of maintaining a social Elysium but with whether or not the actual expectations of the property's late charitable owner, John Hiram, are being fulfilled. "The contentment of these almsmen, if content they be, can give [the warden] no title to his wealth!" the *Jupiter* argues (*W* VII.90). Such statements imply that, like other aestheticized aspects of Church functioning, the warden's social or affective value to the hospital is invalid; the wardenship is simply an impractical office ("Why an alms-house should have a warden we cannot pretend to explain" [XIII.170]) that adds dignity and beauty to the illegal diversion of funds into the Church's coffer. The reformer John Bold is likewise distinctly unappreciative of the alleged social value of the experiences offered by Church property. In his eagerness to seek justice for the poor of Barchester, he acquaints himself only with the financial technicalities of the hospital founder's will: "He got a copy of John Hiram's will, of the wording of which he made himself perfectly master. He ascertained the extent of the

[56] Martin is quoting from an article that appeared in the *London Times* 19 May 1876.

property, and as nearly as he could the value of it; and made out a schedule of what he was informed was the present distribution of its income" (II.24). In addition, he dismisses his sister Mary's argument that "you will never make those twelve men happier than they now are" (VI.77). Instead of considering the persons affected individually, he insists, "I mean to see, if I can, that justice be done to the poor of the city of Barchester generally, who are, in fact, the legatees under the will. I mean, in short, to put the matter right" (VI.75). By subordinating the priorities of care on which the Church based its stewardship claims to priorities of justice and right, the reformers effectively redefine the Church's responsibilities, undercutting its moral authority with their own radically different approach to stewardship.

The reformers' non-affective approach removes the mask of property aestheticization to reveal a world of responsibilities not previously considered by the likes of Mr. Harding. The reportage on Bold's discoveries by the London paper the *Jupiter* indicates that the reformers strictly interpret the Church's relationship to John Hiram's property as that of a steward who is under obligation to follow a master's directive and cannot rightly use the lord's funds to enrich itself. They marvel "that the warden or master of an old alms-house attached to Barchester Cathedral is in receipt of twenty-five times the annual income appointed for him by the will of the founder" (VII.90), implying that the moral distastefulness of the Church's actions lies in its flagrant flouting of accountability. Meanwhile, "the legatees under the founder's will have received no advantage from the increase in the value of the property during the last four centuries, such increase having been absorbed by the so-called warden" (VII.90). Because they believe the bedesmen to be the heirs of Hiram's property, the reformers also believe that, upon Hiram's death, the Church became the bedesmen's steward and only holds the property in trust for their benefit, which explains both the reformers'

outrage and their claim that each of the bedesmen is entitled to one hundred pounds a year (IV.44). A sentence from a later article in the *Jupiter* implies that, though the Church may manage Hiram's lands and the money derived from those lands, its right to any of the profits from that land is nonexistent: "the warden may, for anything we know, be worth much more [than eight hundred a year] to the church; but if so, let the church pay him out of funds justly at its own disposal" (XIII.171). By pointing out the Church's violations of their version of stewardship, the reformers expose the self-interested desires for gain and power underlying the Church's own stewardship rhetoric.

The reformers, however, are less aware or less willing to admit their own self-interested motives in seeking a good steward for the bedesmen, and in this they, like the Church, also allow their stewardship rhetoric to mask harmful attitudes and behaviors. Only Mary Bold, for example, recognizes the "self-devotion" (VI.78) in John Bold's ostensibly virtuous crusade to ensure the Church's strict adherence to the expectations of financial stewardship. Though the Church perhaps errs in overemphasizing the social aspect of stewardship, Bold's commitment to and pride in his identity as the "upholder of the rights of the poor of Barchester" (II.23) and the satisfaction he feels in "the warmth of his own virtue" (VI.75) leads him to resolutely separate personal feeling, friendship, and even the bedesmen's own emotional well-being from his duty to see that justice is done them. This extreme, the narrator implies, is just as harmful as the Church's approach, offering the image of Bold's acquisitive attorney stirring up discontent among the bedesmen in order to obtain their signatures on a petition as evidence of the ways in which the effectiveness of Bold's rhetoric is self-serving rather than at the service of social justice. Indeed, Bold's stance as the reinstater of true stewardship is inescapably informed by a desire to see his name, and possibly his own literary efforts, trumpeted in

print (e.g., VII.92). Instigated by his own pride and by his solicitor's love of a fee,[57] Bold little imagines how his stewardship-based appeals, in the hands of the journalists, could be used to further marginalize the bedesmen.

Like Bold, Tom Towers, a writer for the *Jupiter*, claims that "private motives are detrimental to public justice" (XV.204). This versatile motto serves many purposes for the *Jupiter* and for Tom Towers personally. It is, for example, the basis of the stewardship framework constructed to expose and undermine the Church's financial management practices as morally reprehensible. To Towers, Mr. Harding is the representative of self-interest, and dismissing the warden—his symbol of Church stewardship—[58] is his strategy for decrying all that is beautiful but useless and resource-draining about the Church. Simultaneously, espousing a commitment to "public justice" that the Church evidently lacks allows Towers to claim the morally superior position of steward for himself. Assuming the mediating position associated with stewards, Towers constructs newsmen as possessors of information, knowledge and influence that they have the responsibility to manage and transmit for the public good: "Certain men are employed in writing for the public press; and if they are induced either to write or to abstain from writing by private motives, surely the public press would soon be of little value" (XV.203). According to Towers, the press and its writers are, like stewards, only servants of a public that has entrusted them with its welfare.

However, private interests are not long in emerging. "Look at the recognized worth of different newspapers, and see if it does not mainly depend on the assurance

[57] Finney, the attorney, is nothing short of ecstatic at the thought of having the very cause he is engaged in taken up by the *Jupiter*. He thinks he "might be examined before committees of the House of Commons, with heaven knows how much a day for his personal expenses—he might be engaged for years on such a suit!" (VII.93). Never does he consider how prolonging the case could exacerbate the inequities experienced by the bedesmen and deprive them of their current comforts as well.

[58] The word "warden" has many of the same connotations as "steward," especially the ideas of being a custodian or caretaker.

which the public feel that such a paper is, or is not, independent" (XV.203), Towers calmly tells John Bold, exhibiting a blatant awareness of the usefulness of acting like a steward in establishing a paper's reputation and increasing its circulation. This, indeed, is the journalist's true agenda. Not for nothing is the *Jupiter* described as Mt. Olympus and Tom Towers as one of its gods (XIV.180). Even other characters in the novel consider the *Jupiter*'s power to be such that an opinion from "it was better than a decision from the Lord Chancellor" (VII.93). Ironically, then, given its apparent commitment to serving the public, the *Jupiter* is associated with oppressive forces like the Russian czar and the American mob and is distinctly unaccountable to any entity for the influence it wields. Its articles are unsigned (XIV.183)[59] and responsibility is therefore easily evaded, as Tom Towers demonstrates in his meeting with John Bold. "My dear fellow," he replies to Bold's intimations that he wrote the articles castigating Mr. Harding, "I really cannot answer for the *Jupiter*" (XV.202). Tom Towers is indeed the most careful steward—of the empire of the press.

Repurposing Stewardship

Though both the Church and the reformers position themselves as stewards, they both fail to actually perform stewardship. The narrator makes it clear that redress for injustice can be sought from neither party: "Poor old men! Whoever may be righted or wronged by this inquiry, they at any rate will assuredly be only injured: to them it can only be an unmixed evil" (*W* IV.43). He echoes this lament with another: "Poor public! how often is it misled! against what a world of fraud has it to contend!" (XV.204). The

[59] Trollope and other novelists believed that the practice of publishing anonymous articles was deeply injurious to the public. These authors, explains Matthew Rubery, "shared a particular distrust of the way journalists made the public world visible while at the same time keeping their own identities invisible through the controversial policy of unsigned contributions" (84). Trollope himself was a founder of the *Fortnightly Review*, which pioneered the use of the byline in English journalism.

two ostensible masters—the public and the bedesmen—actually receive the greatest injury at the hands of their fraudulent stewards. That both types of stewardship are needed becomes clear in the aftermath of the public debate. Mr. Harding, dismayed by the personal nature of the *Jupiter*'s attacks and convinced of his personal but not of institutional guilt in the matter of his salary, resigns his post as warden. His withdrawal creates space for the reform party to freely exercise their brand of stewardship, but instead of taking responsibility for the bedesmen, John Bold also withdraws, and a vacuum is created. Mr. Chadwick continues to deposit the profits from Hiram's land into the hospital's bank account (XXI.281), but with no steward to manage the funds, they become ineffective either for the cause of care or the cause of justice.

The results of this failure to provide stewardship indicate that though the stewardship stance was ultimately problematic for those being served, both types of stewardship had the potential to fill real needs. Without a warden, for example, the attractiveness of the hospital and grounds wanes, and with it the community it sustained. Mr. Harding's act of bidding goodbye to "every tree, and shrub, and shady nook that he knew so well" (XIII.177) even before taking leave of the bedesmen suggests that these objects were repositories of memory and important points of access to his emotional world, access he knew would be lost as changes altered the hospital. Indeed, a few years after his departure, though "the hospital itself has not been allowed to go to ruins […], the whole place has become disordered and ugly" (XXI.281). Its exterior remains meaningful, but instead of bespeaking community ties and shared history, it communicates rupture, abandonment and alienation: "The warden's garden is a wretched wilderness, the drive and paths are covered with weeds, the flower-beds are bare, and the unshorn lawn is now a mass of long damp grass and unwholesome moss" (XXI.281). Clearly, the warden's investment in maintaining the beauty, not just the utility, of the

hospital and grounds had been a significant benefit of his "management" of Hiram's charity; without it, the hospital is "a miserable relic of what had once been so good and so comfortable" (XXI.281). The bedesmen are noticeably affected by this change. Instead of lives mediated through "the constant presence of a master, a neighbour, and a friend" (XXI.280) and deaths among familiar faces and things, their horizon darkens: "they began to understand that one among them would be alone there in the now comfortless hospital" (XXI.281) and they become atomized and contentious, dying one by one with only "the occasional kindness of a stranger" (XXI.280) to minister to them. Marginalized and contextless, the bedesmen's fate is emblematic of the potential fate of the English people if left without a steward like the Church to offer an affective matrix for social experience.

Nevertheless, as Trollope's *Clergymen of the Church of England* chronicles, the Church's beauty, dignity, and magnificence was being phased out in favor of practicality, educated spirituality, and men who earned every farthing of their salary. Trollope pauses to cry, "This is, alas! A new order of things coming on us which threatens us with some changes, not for the better" (*CCE* 59), perhaps because, though necessary, these changes were both signs and causes of the decline in the Church's social, cultural and political influence in England. For example, as civil alternatives to rites such as marriage became more available, the association of grandeur, mystery and reverence lent by the Church to such rites of passage diminished. In addition, because he was no longer called upon to perform such rites for most denominations, the clergyman's role was eventually reduced from caring for every inhabitant of his parish to monitoring "a specific clientele" (Knight 1). Accompanying this limitation to the clergyman's scope of responsibility was a narrower definition of himself and his duties. The result was a shift from the "gentleman theory" of church work, which defined clergymen "as gentlemen first and spiritual

leaders second" (O'Mealy 254), to the "pastoral ministry theory," in which the clergyman's unique contribution or "skill" was his spirituality. Despite the needed spiritual revival this began in the Church, the clergyman's reduced visibility and responsibility to communities both reflected and resulted in the Church's weakening contribution to stabilizing the social order and exacerbated the Church's own vulnerability to marginalizing forces. Early in the century, it was recognized that "A Church that functioned more efficiently within the local community, with a more active clergy taking a greater interest in local affairs, and providing schooling and material relief as well as pastoral support and religious instruction, would make the countryside altogether more safe and secure" (Knight 68), and the gentleman clergyman was well suited to these community roles. So valuable were his functions to social stability that the disappearance of the gentlemanly variety of parson is greeted with a minor rebellion in Trollope's imagination: "Gentlemen [the rustic] will obey and respect, in the gentleman he will believe. […] While in the other [the new variety of parson] the rustic will not believe, nor by him will he be restrained, if restraint be necessary" (*CCE* 61). As the Church was dislodged from its hegemonic position and its participation in defining the English social order was significantly restructured, it was indeed as if a steward of English social life had departed.

The Warden, however, in depicting the *Jupiter*'s alternative stewardship, suggests the possibility of a replacement for the Church in English society. As Sherman Hawkins noticed, "The *Jupiter*, that great London daily, directly competes with the Church as a source of moral authority. It is represented as a rival church with its own pope and inquisition, its vatican, issuing 'infallible bulls for the guidance of British souls and bodies'" (208). It is true that the rapid changes observed in Victorian politics and society were being shaped by the authoritative voices emanating from print media. Trollope

himself attributes many of the changes seen in the Church since the 1830s to the effects of information and ideas disseminated through newspapers and other print media. The Oxford Movement, he claims, "gave rise by their works to so much thought on a matter which had been allowed for years to go on almost without any thought, that it may be said […] that they made episcopal idleness impossible, and clerical idleness rare" (*CCE* 25). Importantly, however, newspapers and other publications were so powerful because they accommodated the "new, populist affirmation of rational individualism" (Clark 540) by allowing an unprecedented degree of public participation in the policy decisions. Knight confirms that a Church-wide "rage to participate in the reform debate" (151) in the early 1830s led to the output of innumerable publications, the numbers of which seem to have peaked in 1833. Such publications, produced by laymen and clergy, undoubtedly informed the steps taken at the formation of the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1835. Clearly, a new force was exerting its influence on English life, a force mediated and shaped by newspapers, a force that Trollope called "the public."

If the newspapers are Trollope's potential new steward, the public is the community he anticipates will replace the old hierarchical order represented by Barchester social life and especially the social relations in Hiram's hospital. Trollope, however, is manifestly concerned about this new community and the shared values upon which it would be constituted. The stewardship offered by the "unchecked influence of the new class of journalists over the reading public" (Rubery 86) is clearly, based on the *Jupiter*'s unfavorable depiction in *The Warden*, not only insufficient to replace an entity like the Church, but potentially harmful and dangerous. In *The Warden*, the newspaper has the power to silence voices of truth with its absolute authority, and the trust placed in its declarations by the bedesmen of Hiram's hospital again offers insight into the damage that could be caused to English social life by an irresponsible steward. The old men are

filled not only with unreasonable expectations but with ingratitude, malice, and a false sense of self-sufficiency because "the *Jupiter* had declared that their warden was no better than a robber" (VII.93). These effects on a wider public are echoed in Mr. Harding's contemplation of the consequences of the *Jupiter*'s first leading article on the hospital controversy:

> They say eighty thousand copies of the *Jupiter* are daily sold, and that each copy is read by five persons at least. Four hundred thousand readers then would hear this accusation against him; four hundred thousand hearts would swell with indignation at the griping injustice, the barefaced robbery of the warden of Barchester Hospital! (VII.91)

The creation of a nation of John Bolds, with too little "diffidence" and too little "trust in the honest purposes of others" (II.15) seems inevitable in a nation that has placed its well-being in the hands of newspapers like the *Jupiter*.

Mr. Harding perhaps voices the deepest concern of all as he considers such a monopoly of opinion and information is to be broken and his single, truth-bearing voice to be heard. "How was he to open his heart to this multitude, to these thousands, the educated, the polished, the picked men of his own country; how show them that he was no robber, no avaricious, lazy priest scrambling for gold, but a retiring, humble-spirited man, who had innocently taken what had innocently been offered to him?" (VII.91-92). The answer, of course, is not to "write to the *Jupiter*" (VII.92) as the bishop suggests. Rather, as Trollope explains in his autobiography, the answer was to write a novel. If a newspaper article is nothing "but an expression of the views taken by one side" (XV.204-205), the novel as a form, and especially *The Warden* as it was conceived by Trollope, is distinctly the opposite. Not only was his mission to manifest a sense of integrity by caricaturing neither side, but his success in even-handedly presenting the viewpoints of both parties discomfited reviewers seeking an absolute moral statement. However, *The*

Warden not only holds accountable by bringing publicity to "the one group safe from it: the journalists themselves" (Rubery 85), but proposes that the novel as a form provides the model for a steward of the public in its ability to both honor individual perspectives, personhoods, and voices and carefully manage rather than seek to control the imaginative space in which they can mingle, interact, and react—and become and create a community.

The Warden offers an interesting example of how the figure of the steward naturally invoked nostalgic and therefore emotionally potent memories of an older England, of a social and religious unity that many still longed to identify with. As Elsie Michie observes, Trollope's novels "focus on the estate as an image of ideal, non-mercenary values whose purity is under threat" (22). But the puncturing of this nostalgia performed by Trollope through the awakening of Mr. Harding and the warden's eventual resignation both demystifies this past and asserts the urgency of addressing the fracturedness of the present. Masterfully, the idea of the steward is repurposed to perform this confrontation and ultimately to assert the relevance of the old English life to the new. *The Warden* is therefore also an example of how the image of the steward endured, revivified, in the English imagination, a point of access to values that did not have to be lost.

Chapter Four

Stewarding Literary Property in *Aurora Leigh*

Breaking New Ground

If Trollope's work in *The Warden* is to expose the financial realities and social inequities masked by stewardship rhetoric, the eponymous heroine of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) embraces the potential of the steward to create the very misdirections that Archdeacon Grantly expected the Church's stained glass windows to justify. For Aurora, the value of the aesthetic is not in the link it provides to a nostalgized English past; rather, it is the key to a spiritually animated and unified English future. In order for this vision of futurity to be realized, however, the poetess needs someone to manage her literary property so that her own literary labor can be sublimated and aestheticized as an act of spiritual cultivation. She needs a steward.

Aurora Leigh's poetic labor is the subject of an interesting but under-explored strain of scholarly criticism[60] on *Aurora Leigh* that approaches the work not as an epic (e.g., Bailey, Laird), a künstlerroman (e.g., Hoeckley, Houston), a novel, or a "subversive hybridization" of genres (Stone) but as an example of the georgic. Virgil's *Georgics*, for which the genre is named, were poetic "instructions or precepts (*praecepta*) for the tending (*cultus*) of crops, vines, cattle, and bees" that represented "the dignity—but also the difficulty and daily care—of rural labor" (Goodman 556). However, Kevis Goodman notes that "the *Georgics* are just as much about the poet's careful labor of representation

[60] I have found only two articles discussing the georgic aspects of *Aurora Leigh*. The first, Anne D. Wallace's "'Nor in Fading Silks Compose': Sewing, Walking, and Poetic Labor in *Aurora Leigh*," was first presented in an earlier version as a conference paper in 1993 and published in 1997. Indebted to some of Wallace's observations is Karen Hadley's "'Tulips on Dunghills': Regendering the Georgic in Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*," published in 2014. My own chapter originated as a conference paper in 2013, before Hadley's article was published.

within a larger field of cultivating activities," a comparison of the "tending of words and the culture of the ground" (556). According to Goodman, though many English poets found the genre appealing,[61] most of them incorporated only georgic elements into their verses rather than penning Virgilian imitations. Especially after Wordsworth, Goodman observes, "in part because of the growing prominence of the novel and other prose genres dedicated to the tasks of daily life, georgic […] appears more often as a mode" in English poetry (557). This is the case in *Aurora Leigh*.

Anne D. Wallace's "'Nor in Fading Silks Compose': Sewing, Walking, and Poetic Labor in 'Aurora Leigh'" (1997), for example, calls attention to the presence of the "sotto voce genres of georgic and its early nineteenth-century extension, peripatetic" (225) in Barrett Browning's poem to expose the connections between "issues of women and artistry, and of women and paid labor" (225). Arguing that the importance of walking to Aurora's self-cultivation casts her as a Wordsworthian pedestrian-poet, Wallace suggests that Aurora's materially productive walking, instead of suppressing women's public, economic activities as Wordsworth does, "shifts and opens peripatetic, using peripatetic conventions to unsettle the gendered distinction the mode implicitly supports" (240). This regendering of the male poet's labor allows the feminine work of sewing, so prevalent throughout the poem's early books and initially indicative of women's domestic and decidedly non-economic labor, to be reassessed "as genuine georgic labor," as "true cultivation" (242). However, it is not in Aurora's but in Marian Erle's narrative that sewing "functions as a salvation from walking" (245), from the masculinist

[61] John Dryden's translation in 1697 popularized the *Georgics* and inspired multiple significant literary attempts to produce similar works, including John Philips's *Cyder* (1708) and Christopher Smart's *The Hop Garden* (1753). Goodman lists James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) and William Cowper's *The Task* (1785), both of which were immensely popular, as poems that are indebted to the georgic (557).

construction of peripatetic, granting women their own, superior, georgic labor—the labor that Wallace argues ultimately enables poetry (248).

However, according to Wallace, the images and instances of both walking and sewing almost completely disappear in the poem's last two books, replaced by "an abstract discourse on love, which now is made to transcend labor" (250). Wallace concludes that Barrett Browning's final silence on the issues of gendered labor established in the poem's earlier books creates an "unresolvable textual ambivalence" (250) and that "rather than settling into any of our proposed positions, feminist or patriarchal, *Aurora Leigh*'s representations of the relations among women, work, and writing refuse complete resolution" (251). This conclusion, however, invites further scrutiny of the work performed by the georgic resonances of Barrett Browning's masterpiece. Karen Hadley, for example, expresses dissatisfaction with what she calls Wallace's "trade-off of material agency for transcendent love," arguing that "both can be maintained through the narrative's conclusion" (473). Her article, "'Tulips on Dunghills': Regendering the Georgic in Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*," focuses on the ways in which Aurora seeks to regender her cousin and would-be lover Romney's masculinist, Virgilian uses of the georgic "to update it for her own more optimistic view of her creativity and of the civilization in which she lives and labors" (471). I too am interested in the ways Aurora "transforms conventional georgic 'roots' in agricultural labor to include both tending the soil and also tending social ills, human relationships, and words themselves" (468), but I disagree with Hadley that the elision of female georgic labor Wallace notices is an oversight. Rather, I approach it as an insight about Aurora's act of poetic creation and relationship to the literary market, as an opportunity to explore how and why Aurora ultimately distances herself from the physical and economic realities in which writing poetry involves her.

I propose that literary labor, its material product, and its financial benefits are not dropped from the text, but rather displaced and sublimated to allow Aurora to achieve her final end of personal and mass national transcendence through poetry. Specifically, concerns about literary property are rerouted through a character who acts as Aurora's informal literary agent, a fellow artist and friend named Vincent Carrington. Significantly, Carrington assumes the position of steward of Aurora's literary property just as her poetry becomes financially remunerative and therefore overtly associated with the market. Throughout the novel-poem, Aurora has directly and indirectly insisted that the poet's work is a special labor beyond economic valuation, particularly through her separation of the labor involved in writing prose and that needed to write poetry. To create this separation, she emphasizes the exchange value of prose while aestheticizing her poetic labor as an act of spiritual cultivation by describing it in a georgic mode. However, just like prose, her poetry must be transformed into a commodity if it is to be accessible to the public—the edifying effects of poetry must be experienced by individuals *en masse* to effect reform and infuse a spiritual life into the materialistic age in which Aurora lives. However, the spiritualizing, georgic work of poetry is adulterated when it becomes reducible, like prose, to its purchase price or when the poet becomes, by implication, a hawker of wares or even a prostitute instead of a mediator for God. As the manager of Aurora's literary property, Carrington and his work of stewardship, his representation of her in the literary market, makes Aurora's continued work of poetic representation possible. Indeed, it allows her to represent the processes that produce and circulate her poem as a commodity as redeemable through georgic labor and herself as the supreme antithesis to Romney Leigh's attempts to reform his society's social inequities by attending, like the stewards of yore, to the resources for affective community available in fixed property. The failure of Romney's adoption of the stance of

stewardship towards his own property to effect social change marks the ultimate movement of true stewardship into the literary realm and establishes literary property as the new basis of affective community.

Her Father's England

When the orphaned Aurora Leigh, half Italian, half English, arrives in her father's native land to be taken into the care of her maiden aunt, she is dismayed. "Was this my father's England? The great isle?" she wonders internally as she gazes out of the window of the moving train. "The ground seemed cut up from the fellowship / Of verdure, field from field, as man from man" (I.259-261). The country Aurora is introduced to on this first encounter with the English landscape has undergone transitions that have left it need of reform: the view from her train window is of a post-enclosure England, webbed with fences, the common lands and old, communal life that had once embodied the positive value of "community" gone.[62] The reform needed is indicated in the sense and sound of the lines used to articulate what she sees. The disruption of fellowship, of human relations, of a community in which "the fields were places where people talked while they worked, and they worked together" (Neeson 2) is represented as much by the apparent enclosure of the fields as by the enjambment after "fellowship" and the commas bounding "field from field," which break up the line, forcing apart what was once a natural communion of properties and laborers.

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[62] The lifestyle that supposedly existed in agrarian village life was characterized by nineteenth-century thinkers like Tönnies in the concept of Gemeinschaft. This social pattern was conceptualized as "a group of people living for generations in a given place and regulating their lives to set customs and beliefs" (Graver 2). Such communities were maintained through "communal celebrations, […] kinship ties, dignifying work, love and social sympathy, mutuality of obligation and concern" (100). It is Aurora's aim to find a way to revive such a lifestyle in and urbanizing, industrializing England in which land-based communities were, as she depicts them, no longer viable.

Perhaps most telling, however, is the division of the "ground" from its own "verdure." As Wallace notes, vegetative imagery is associated throughout *Aurora Leigh* with "the quality and success of poetic work" (243) and therefore, as I argue, the health of the country's cultural and spiritual life. England, Aurora seems to imply, is a land of materialism that, divided from its spiritual self, produces citizens that are likewise alienated from a spiritual existence and from each other. Her further description of the English landscape later in Book I points to the same reading: "On English ground / You understand the letter . . ere the fall, / How Adam lived in a garden. All the fields / Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-like; […] The trees, round, wooly, ready to be clipped; / And if you seek for any wilderness / You find, at best, a park" (I.627-634). England's attempt at a faithful imitation of paradise only points to its fallen state, to its separation from the heavenly in its focus on the external, on adhering to the letter of the law. Rather than transporting the viewer to an experience of the sublime, England presents a "nature tamed" (I.634) and more likely to draw one's mind to prosaic subjects like breakfast (I.639). This landscape is in sharp contrast to Aurora's depictions of Italy, with its "multitudinous mountains, sitting in / The magic circle, with the mutual touch / Electric, panting from their full deep hearts / Beneath the influent heavens, and waiting for / Communion and commission" (I.622-626). Even the lines describing this landscape spill over and into each other; in England, by contrast, everything is bounded, self-contained, waiting not to be enlivened by partaking of the divine but to be trimmed of excessive growth.

The human lives nurtured in such an environment are correlates of the corseted fields. Aurora's Tuscan blood, for example, has made her different from the Leighs. Her aunt bears a strong resemblance to the "fields / […] tied up fast with hedges" to forestall unruly growth, with her stiff posture and "her somewhat narrow forehead braided tight /

As if for taming accidental thoughts / From possible pulses" (I.272-275). Aurora adjudges that she has led what "she called a virtuous life, / A quiet life, which was not life at all" (I.228-289); her aunt's behavior is very correct, but she feels no love or sympathy for Aurora and regards her community obligations as a gentlewoman as an opportunity to reinforce class boundaries (I.297-301). Indeed, just as English nature is a domesticated fowl in comparison with the soaring eagle of Italy's grandeur (I.634-637), Aurora's aunt lives "a sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage" (I.305), while Aurora, with her vibrant inner life, is a "wild bird" (I.310). Aurora's own father was similarly "austere" (I.65) and only met Aurora's Italian mother "after a dry life-time spent at home / In college-learning, law, and parish talk" that had all but parched his soul. It is notable that though he travels to Italy, specifically to Florence, an artistic mecca, his purpose is supremely banal: "he had come to spend a month / And note the secret of Da Vinci's drains" (I.71-72). Despite being raised on an English estate—the nostalgized representation of a life of feeling and care—the siblings lives are shaped not by relationship but by duty and empty forms.

Indeed, the context in which Aurora experiences the spiritual bankruptcy of the English landscape suggests that the lingering existence of England's old property system is not only ineffective in providing a venue for an affective community but is actively contributing to the sense of oppression that now defines the countryside and its inhabitants. Aurora remarks cynically in a later book that the "feudal form" suits the English people's "ways of thought and reverence / The special form, with us, being still the thing" (VI.43-47). For Aurora, allegiance to a form is little better than enslavement: "Let me think / Of forms less, and the external. Trust the spirit / […] to make the form; / For otherwise we only imprison spirit, / And not embody" (V.223-226). Therefore, as social changes have inundated England—including those that, like enclosure and

industrialization, altered the English landscape and necessitated an alternative mode in which to experience community and affective life—the persistence of the estate system despite its increasing irrelevance marks its purely self-serving intentions; the form remains, but not the spirit, making the form itself an oppressive and often unjust imposition. Aurora's reaction to her erstwhile suitor, Lord Eglinton, strongly suggests that the old forms of estate life that had once comprised a system of deference and obligations embedded in a context of sympathetic cooperation can no longer excuse or mask the harsh economic realities of rural life in a post-enclosure England. Lord Howe describes Lord Eglinton as

> A reputable man,
> An excellent landlord of the olden stamp,
> If somewhat slack in new philanthropies;
> Who keeps his birthdays with a tenants' dance,
> Is hard upon them when they miss the church
> Or keep their children back from catechism,
> But not ungentle when the aged poor
> Pick sticks at hedge-sides; nay, I've heard him say
> "The old dame has a twinge because she stoops:
> That's punishment enough for felony." (V.868-877)

Aurora, however, is unimpressed by the "gentleness" of a man whose generosity leaves decrepit old women to gather a pittance of fuel on the roadside. Thinking of her own poverty, she replies, bitterly, as Lord Howe observes (V.888), "O tender-hearted landlord! May I take / My long lease with him, when the time arrives / For gathering winter-faggots!" (V.878-880), implying the absence of real care in Lord Eglinton's adherence to pre-industrial community patterns. Rather, just as the peer wants to marry Aurora, not for love but to have a "star upon his stage of Eglinton" (V.914), men like Lord Eglinton continue to cultivate forms that appear worthy of reverence but have no affective content.

In line with this observation, it is telling that the Leigh estate was deprived of a proper steward when Aurora's father abandoned it for his Italian love. In marrying Aurora's mother, Aurora's father was, according to his sister, "fooled away" from his "obvious duties" to the estate, "and, depriving her, / His sister, of the household precedence, / Had wronged his tenants" (I.342-346). The absence of a steward—and especially the relocation of that steward to Italy—suggests the relocation and even the re-education of the steward in a place that in the poem has a distinctly spiritualized and spiritually nourishing landscape and, significantly, associations with the aesthetic effects of art. At first, her father is unresponsive to the aesthetic beauty surrounding him; he is absorbed in some wholly prosaic "English question" (I.74) when he is "flooded with a passion unaware" (I.68) at the sight of his future bride. Aurora describes the moment as redemptive—"a sacramental gift" (I.90)—and as the infusion of a body with a spirit: "My father, […] through love had suddenly / Thrown off the old conventions, broken loose / From chin-bands of the soul, like Lazarus" (I.176-178). Her father's resurrection into a new life and its liberation of his mind, soul, and body, making love and communion with another human being possible, is indicative of the restoration England itself needs and ostensibly prepares him to effect it. However, Aurora's father dies before he can return to the estate with a new vision of stewardship, and it is his daughter who returns instead. Importantly, however, Aurora cannot work through property to restore an English community and reform England. Her father's marriage to an Italian has caused Aurora to be disowned "by a clause in the entail / Excluding offspring by a foreign wife" (II.611-612). Aurora seeks other solutions more fitting to her time and her Italian blood, as I will discuss below, but her cousin, Romney, who has inherited the estate in her place, seems determined to reestablish the model of stewardship her father may have assumed.

Romney, like Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch, is extremely uncomfortable with property ownership. Aurora writes that his early inheritance of Leigh Hall was like a nightmare to her cousin and had blighted his youth, "Repressing all its seasonable delights, / And agonizing with a vastly sense / Of universal hideous want and wrong / To incriminate possession" (I.518-521). This sense of the burden of possession was likely informed by Romney's knowledge that his own inheritance of the estate was the outcome of the disinheritance of Aurora. From his youth, then, Romney has experienced property ownership as exclusionary, arbitrary, and unjust and has reason to believe that the old estate system is an unviable venue for the redemption Aurora envisions. His own fiancée, Marian Erle, was not a child laborer in the factories whose labor conditions so concern Romney, but she suffered commensurate cruelty as she tramped the English countryside with her family. Under the old pre-enclosure system, Mr. Erle would have been able to gain common rights as a squatter, which Marian, who says she was born in a "hut, built up at night, / To evade the landlord's eye, of mud and turf" (III.831-832), certainly indicates that he was.[63] Squatters like Mr. Erle "settled on a waste, built a cottage, and got together a few geese or sheep, perhaps even a horse or a cow, and proceeded to cultivate the ground" (Hammond 78-79). The common rights he could eventually become entitled to would have allowed him to support his family when supplemented by "any wage labour they could obtain in the village" ("The disappearance of the cottager" 54). Marian records that her father followed this pattern: "Her father earned his life by random jobs / Despised by steadier workmen—keeping swine / On commons, picking hops, or hurrying on / The harvest at wet seasons" (III.857-859). However, enclosure ended common rights

[63] Beckett describes this very practice in his discussion of squatters: "If commons were unstinted anyone could set up a cottage and enjoy the benefits. Individuals could erect a home of some sort on the edges of heaths and commons; indeed, it was widely believed that a cottage erected on the waste overnight entitled its builder to undisputed possession" ("The disappearance of the cottager" 54).

for squatters, making such subsistence increasingly less tenable and forcing such individuals to rely more heavily on wage labor (Humphries 19). This being scarce, Mr. Erle is indeed at a loss for work, and the poverty experienced by the family leads to drunkenness and violence. The dehumanizing effects of the family's poverty and their disenfranchisement are evident in their economic valuation of their own daughter: "Had they kept the north, / They might have had their pennyworth out of [Marian], / Like other parents, in the factories" (III.1026-1028). It is not only in the factories, however, that the value of a life is reduced to a wage. In her desperation, Marian's mother attempts to sell her daughter to a local squire, and Marian flees, but not before seeing how thoroughly the estate system no longer represented a community, but capitalist class relations.

Tortured by the knowledge that his own wealth signifies another's exploitation, Romney dedicates his life to the pursuit of social justice. However, his efforts represent little more than an attempt to breathe life back into the old form of the estate system and thereby neutralize his own complicity in class antagonism, in the creation of the "mediate gulph" (II.278) between rich and poor. This reality is emphasized by Romney's replication of the steward's role as he seeks to dispose of property in a way that will mitigate injustice and cement relational ties. This replication is first carried out on a small scale that is representative of his future reform efforts: believing that he can sidestep the legal clause disinheriting Aurora, he proposes to give Aurora's aunt the bulk of the inheritance, which Aurora can then inherit from her upon her aunt's death. In other words, he desires to turn his aunt into a steward of the Leigh estate,[64] relinquishing

[64] Women were often placed in this position when they became inheritors. Alistair Owens explains that "the principle role of widows who were beneficiaries of their husband's wills was to act as the custodians of the family estate" (310). In language reminiscent of the descriptions of stewards' roles, he adds, "widows largely looked after property for others and could only use it prudently for the maintenance of themselves and minority children," becoming "intermediaries in a system of 'delayed' intergenerational estate transfer" (310).

responsibility of it. In disposing of the Leigh fortune in this way, he seems to hope to fulfill his own "obligation to provide for [his] family and protect it from fragmentation and destitution"—an impulse that "can perhaps be interpreted as part of a wider discourse of responsibility and good stewardship" observed in male nineteenth-century property owners (Owens 304). However, the aunt dies before opening the letter containing Romney's offer, and Romney's plan is frustrated. Aurora rejects the gift in any case, recognizing that Romney's largesse, which ostensibly rights his "crime of possession"—his own enrichment through Aurora's impoverishment (II.1027)—actually enslaves her to the empty feudal ideal the estate represents: he expects that his gift will allow Aurora to "walk this road with silken shoes, / As clean as any lady of our house / Supposed the proudest" (II.1022-1024). In other words, he places on Aurora the "burthen" (II.1148), as she calls it, of representing his gift and the Leigh fortune as an act of generosity that makes property ownership no sin but rather a liberation from subjection to the conditions of wage labor. Having no allegiance to the "special form" of the estate, however, Aurora feels no obligation to help Romney revive it at such a great cost to her personal liberty. She refuses to aestheticize possession by becoming the lady and scion of the house of Leigh and goes forth to work a distinctly different type of reformation.

Romney, however, persists in applying the same logic to address the "universal hideous want and wrong" (I.520) that Aurora's dispossession only gestures towards. Unable to pass the property to Aurora, he attempts to bestow it upon the entire class it has disinherited and disenfranchised. His method of doing so is to establish a phalanstery at Leigh Hall—an egalitarian community whose members hold property and possessions in common. To this community[65] he invites the poor, including Marian's father, "to dine

[65] Interestingly, a phalanstery was considered by at least one English writer to be a synonym for community. The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes the following 1839 extract from the *New Moral World*: "Phalanstery means almost the same in French Socialism as community does in English Socialism"

and sleep" (VIII.890) and engage in wholesome, rural labor. Though ostensibly the realization of Romney's Christian socialism, the phalanstery merely reproduces the tenant-landlord dynamic. His approach to his phalansterians is paternalistic, not egalitarian: he calls them "my phalansterians" (VIII.961) and "my men and women" (VIII.889) and continues to refer to his property as "my acres" (VIII.930).[66] Clearly, Romney's "social labour at Leigh Hall" (VIII.882) is not a literal socialistic project but a dramatization of "Wip[ing] out earth's furrows of the Thine and Mine / And leaving one green, for all men to play at bowls / With innings for them all!" (II.462-464). That the phalanstery is just a Potemkin village of socialism is emphasized in the way members of the aristocracy, like Lady Waldemar, treat it as a country retreat where they can "tarr[y] half a week" and engage in novelties like cow-milking and butter churning before returning to their starry spheres, having accrued social capital through their interesting experiences (V.779-793). Romney, then, has not truly abandoned the principle of ownership (and, by extension, his era's modes of capital accumulation); he has merely adopted the posture as steward of his own property to legitimize his privilege through a form of land management that appears to eliminate injustice and make property universally available.

("phalanstery," def. 1). A phalanstery, then, is the definitive representation of a community formed by external circumstances, in contrast to the type of affective communities based on sympathetic ties imagined by the likes of George Eliot. Aurora herself muses whether a more complete poetry could "Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants, / more fully than the special outside plans, / Phalansteries, material institutes / The civil conscriptions and lay monasteries / Preferred by modern thinkers, as they thought / The bread of man indeed made all his life" (VI.206-212). In other words, poetry has the power to make the quotidian redeemable, while phalansteries only trap men in the quotidian.

[66] Romney also speaks about the phalansterians and the local peasantry with disturbing condescension and even disgust, calling them "wild beasts" (VIII.994) and intimating that they are innately callous because of their lack of appreciation for the valuable artwork adorning Leigh Hall. "What, / You think your dear Vandykes would give them pause?" he asks sardonically when Aurora is shocked to learn that Leigh Hall and its cultural treasures have burned. This tone is detectable throughout the passage in Book VIII in which he narrates the failure of his phalanstery.

Indeed, Romney's charity, like his generosity to Aurora, comes with a price. Though the phalanstery appears to remove laborers from the labor market and recontextualizes their labor in a non-capitalistic setting, the phalansterians are actually engaged in a system of obligations in which they receive room and board in exchange for complying with Romney's work of representation. Thus, while being asked to perform Romney's social ideal, they are actually reproducing the "close"—and classed—"bonds / Betwixt the generous rich and grateful poor" (VIII.901-902) that characterized the feudal order. Romney's strategy is detected by his phalansterians. Using a dramatic metaphor that highlights the histrionic nature of his social program, Romney recalls how they "Broke up those waxen masks I made them wear, / With fierce contortions of the natural face / And cursed me for my tyrannous constraint / In forcing crooked creatures to live straight" (VIII.891-894). This description suggests that Romney's charges resent the loss of their freedom. Another observer, however, offers additional insight into Romney's failure. Commenting on Romney's impending marriage to the squatter's daughter Marian Erle,[67] Lord Howe remarks,

There's one true thing on earth;
That's love! He takes it up, and dresses it,
And acts a play with it, as Hamlet did,
To show what cruel uncles we have been,
And how we should be uneasy in our minds,
While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a pretty maid
[…]
By symbol, to instruct us formally
To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and class,
And live together in phalansteries. (IV.746-755)

[67] Interestingly, this marriage would rectify not the class gulf created by conditions of industrial labor necessarily—Marian never did become a spinner in a mill—but the capitalization of social relationships in the countryside that drove Marian both to near-death and from the rural to the urban.

Though Romney adeptly mimics the forms of ethical communities, in other words, this reproduction fails to produce—and even actively depletes—the affective content necessary to truly heal England and restore community.

That Romney's effort to put a new spirit into the old form of the estate system is a failure is confirmed in the fate of his phalanstery, which is destroyed when Leigh Hall is burned to the ground. The attitudes of his neighbors suggest that what they resent most about his social experiment is its hypocrisy. The very flames that consume the country house seem to say, "'Look you, Romney Leigh, / We save the people from your saving, here, / Yet so as by fire! we make a pretty show / Besides,—and that's the most you've ever done'" (VIII.979-982). Romney's deliberate adoption of stewardship, in other words, becomes a mockery of true stewardship when it fails to cultivate a community of shared values and instead, like the Church of England in *The Warden*, becomes a method for further entrenching privilege. Without a true steward to mediate the literal conflict between classes, between center and margin, and between old ways and new, the social stability of his neighborhood dissolves. His false stewardship leaves him unable to reconcile the "rural drabs and thieves" to the ones from London who arrive to populate his phalanstery (VIII.924-925). He is berated and abused by the local tenantry, who fear that their poverty will make them fodder for Romney's "social nursery" (V.785) and that, with none of their former social institutions to save them and the neighborhood "Christian gentlefolk" driven away (VIII.934), they will be incarcerated in "Leigh Hell" (VIII.934-939), which for them seems to be equivalent to the workhouses that competed with more traditional forms of charity and outdoor relief.[68] For the poor, in other words,

[68] An increase in pauperism, especially in the south of England and the midlands, where Romney's estate is located, had led to the passing of the New Poor Law in 1834. Under the new law, relief was to be administered only in the workhouse, where conditions were deliberately made demoralizing to deter the poor from seeking aid (Higginbotham). Outdoor relief, which allowed the poor to receive a pittance and food and clothing while living in their own homes, was discouraged by the New Poor Law. In prior periods

Romney's phalanstery is indistinguishable from the new order of life associated with market capitalism, and they enter their protest by destroying it, ending with a torch the possibility of further legitimation of oppression through the feudal mode.

Aurora Leigh's Georgic Labor

Aurora's philosophy for how England's reform is to be accomplished is radically different than her cousin's. In fact, she seems determined to decouple human relations from its associations with fixed property and to establish a new venue for community that works within and humanizes the new economic structures of English society. Aurora's approach is first fully articulated in her debates with her cousin and is shaped by an experience much like her father's. As Aurora grows to womanhood in England, her physical health languishes (I.498) as she feels the stranglehold of convention choking her inner life. She is saved from death, resurrected body and spirit, by the energizing touch of poetry: "Thus, my soul, / At poetry's divine first finger-touch, / Let go conventions and sprang up surprised" (I.850-852). Exclaiming, "O life, O poetry, / —Which means life in life!", she subsequently conflates vitality and verse, and gazing at herself in the mirror proclaims, "We'll live, Aurora! we'll be strong. / The dogs are on us—but we will not die" (I.1065-1066). Having experienced the psychic and physical benefits of art, her natural response to her cousin's concerns about the suffering of the human race is to prescribe a poetry-induced revival of souls: "It takes a soul, / To move a body: it takes a high-souled man, / To move the masses . . even to a cleaner stye: / It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's-breadth off / The dust of the actual.—Ah, your Fouriers failed, / Because

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when outdoor relief was the norm, one of a steward's duties was to help his employer identify those in need and administer to their wants. According to Roger Hainsworth, "In an age in which there was no safety net provided by a welfare state beyond the grudging provisions of the poor laws [stewards] were mediators who supervised the flow of charity, patronage and other forms of assistance" (159). The steward often protected the parish from the expense of caring for needy individuals while offering the poor a humane alternative to the almshouse (171).

not poets enough to understand / That life develops from within" (II.478-484). Aurora's model involves not a focus on improving the material conditions of vast swathes of humanity, but of first producing a societal awakening through the careful cultivation of individual souls, beginning with the poet's. She prophesies: "I hold you will not compass your poor ends / Of barley-feeding and material ease, / Without a poet's individualism to work your universal" (II.475-478). Social reform and the transformation of material conditions can only be effected, she suggests, when England's soullessness is corrected by the spiritual leaven of poetry.

Aurora's response is not merely personal, however. In fact, it may not have even been possible in another age or in another country. The social problems that concern Romney—the sufferings of the spinners in the mills (II.196), the shrieking of the railroads (II.203), the widening gap between the rich and the poor—are distinctly (though not uniquely) English and are clearly the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. But so is Aurora's assumption that a poet could be a distinct vocation and that poetry could perform a special, spiritually beneficent labor for humanity. In *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958), Raymond Williams suggests that the deadened quality and material preoccupations of English life communicated to Aurora by the landscape were a growing general concern and that the modern concept of culture arose in response to the significant changes in social relations brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Industrializing forces had sped the enclosure movement, emptying the countryside and altering social relations both there and in increasingly crowded cities, as Marian Erle's narrative demonstrates. Romney and Aurora are not the only Victorians who express anxiety about the potential effects of these changes on the possibility of affective community, as I have discussed in previous chapters. Williams provides examples of numerous authors articulating concerns that human relationships were being emptied of

human feeling and reduced to market exchanges and that relationships between the classes would soon, as Thomas Carlyle prophesied, become a mere matter of political economy (qtd. in Williams 72). Many echo Romney's lamentations: "Here's the world half blind / With intellectual light, half brutalized / With civilization" (II.199-201), he exclaims, blaming contemporary economic structures for the deterioration of social relations: "And rich men make the poor, who curse the rich, / […] Here's nought to see, / But just the rich man and just Lazarus, / And both in torments […] / Though not a hint of Abraham's bosom" (II.276-279). Williams suggests that the reality this anxiety was based on is exhibited in the changing meanings of the word "industry" from a description of the concrete activities of human beings to an abstract term describing the activities of institutions. The subsumption of the individual by the machine and the mass accounting of human labor this trajectory suggests had, according to Williams, a demoralizing effect that eroded human values.

In Williams's account, the antidote for this demoralization lay precisely where Aurora finds it—in the concepts of art and culture, which could reestablish the social security of communities. Art and culture, too, had undergone a transformation with the arrival of an industrial age. "Culture" began as a word primarily indicating "the tending of natural growth," as in the cultivation of a garden. By the end of the century, "culture" denoted "a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual" (xvi). Its change in meaning is indicative of the "practical separation of certain moral and intellectual activities from the driven impetus of a new kind of society" and their establishment "as a mitigating and rallying alternative" (xviii). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the changed meaning of "art," which originally meant a "skill"—in other words, a labor performed by an artisan, a laborer—but which came over time to denote a special kind of "imaginative truth" (xv) accessible only by the artist. This idea finds a correlate in

Aurora's assertion that poets are "the only truth-tellers, now left to God— / The only speakers of essential truth" (I.859-860). Therefore, while the changing meaning of industry moves the artisan from the farm and workshop to the sweatshop, dehumanizing him, culture distances the artist from labor, making her the repository of what it means to be human and the point of access to a spiritual life, to a set of shared human values that could constitute community.[69] It is this shift, this separation, that allows Aurora to claim that the poet's work is "Most serious work, most necessary work, / As any of the economists'" (II.458-459). She later summarizes the value of this work: "Thus is Art / Self-magnified in magnifying a truth / Which, fully recognized, would change the world / And shift its morals" (VII.854-857). This belief in the reforming potential of art is a product of the very social processes it seeks to provide a corrective for.

This cultivating aspect of artistic labor, however, is the very reason Aurora must separate the act of poetic production from the world of material production and consumption, despite these worlds' necessary and mutually-constituting intersections; her work must remain spiritualized to be spiritualizing, and she must remain the disinterested, inspired mouthpiece of truth for her poetry to be construed as art. It would therefore destroy Aurora's ethos as a poet to admit of any association between her poetic labor and the deadening consequences of mechanization or the dehumanizing effects of market

[69] Romney, of course, would move the laborer back to the farm and workshop. In fact, Romney seems to believe that what Williams describes as the separation of intellectual and moral activities—culture—from labor has merely moved these activities into an exclusive, privileged realm where they can no longer be universally accessed. Indeed, he considers art from an almost Veblen-esque perspective, suggesting that it is an empty and idle pastime signifying only one's distance from the real, material concerns and sufferings of the world: "Who has time / An hour's time . . think! . . To sit upon a bank / And hear the cymbal tinkle in white hands? When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam sing!" (II.168-171). Art, for Romney, has no special or transformative power, and he typically associates Aurora's poetry-making with the other useless female arts in which he typically sees her engaged. As Veblen's theory of "conspicuous leisure" proposes, the "immaterial evidences of past leisure are quasi-scholarly or quasi-artistic accomplishments" such as those Aurora learns under the tutelage of her aunt: "knowledge of the dead languages and the occult sciences; of correct spelling; of syntax and prosody; of the various forms of domestic music and other household art; of the latest properties of dress, furniture, and equipage" (95).

economics. As Cheri Hoeckley states, "The inspirational value of the author's words leaves […] Victorians uncomfortable with these words acquiring monetary value" (136). However, "by the nineteenth century no professional writer could assert his independence from the market" (Houston 214). Aurora herself admits, "There came some vulgar needs: / […] I was constrained for life / To work with one hand for the booksellers" (III.300, 302-303). Many authors resorted to Romney-like representational strategies to "mystif[y] the process by which writers acquire money" (Hoeckley 136). Carlyle, for example, "emphasiz[ed] the anomaly of the writer's life […], refus[ing] to describe the process [by which writers make money] as an economic exchange, constructing instead a nebulous, and therefore irreplaceable, process of gifts falling upon the Great Soul" (137-138). Gail Houston argues that writers had other means of representing themselves as distant from the material concerns associated with authorship. Her article, "Gender Construction and the 'Künstlerroman': *David Copperfield* and *Aurora Leigh*," suggests that the resources of genre, in this case Künstlerroman, may have allowed many authors to engage in acts of self-creation while marking out authorship as the domain of artistic genius—or, as Aurora would have it, God's special truth-tellers. Aurora Leigh is, however, unusually vocal about the material conditions of writing, "squarely situating the poet's place in the marketplace" (233). Houston admits, however, that "Aurora assumes that the qualities of great poetry are innate and unnameable and therefore outside market relations" (229). Aurora herself suggests that to be a poet is by definition to produce nothing of exchange value: "The devil himself scarce trusts his patented / Gold-making art to any who make rhymes, / But culls his Faustus from philosophers / And not from poets. / […] And poverty proves, plainly, special grace" (V.1201-1204, 1206). In a syntactically ambiguous conclusion, she sighs, "At least I am a poet in being poor" (V.1210). While this line could be glossed "At least if I am poor, I am a poet," the order of the words also

suggests the reading, "At least being poor makes me (or authenticates me as) a poet." This noticeable interest in actively representing, not just naively assuming, that the poet is definitively positioned outside of market relations—while being avowedly imbricated in them—takes more than the self-creating resources of Künstlerroman. Rather, Aurora achieves this representation by operating in a mode that allows both the representation of labor and the labor of representation: the georgic.

Of course, a poem as long as *Aurora Leigh* has the potential to encompass many genres and literary modes. Barrett Browning herself often referred to the work as "a novel in verse." However, Aurora's strategy for asserting the uniqueness of the poet's work involves creating a distinction between poetry and other literary forms and genres—especially those that, in the Victorian period, were noticeably marketable, such as novels and journalistic writing.[70] Though Aurora engages in both types of writing, she uses the georgic mode to value these types of literary production differently based on the type of labor they represent, elevating poetry into a culturally beneficent labor and, as I argue, devaluing prose into physical, "industrialized" labor. This split between "poetic" and more realistic, physical forms of labor is classically georgic; the georgic has historically favored idealized versions of labor, its metaphorical connection to the labor of the poet making it unnecessary to dwell on the more distasteful physical details of industrious bodies. As Kevis Goodman notes, the classical georgics "could not have served the practical needs of a real farmer" (556). Therefore, while Wallace assumes that Aurora's georgic labors of walking and sewing dramatize her search for legitimate paid work for

[70] Houston's article compares Dickens's novel *David Copperfield* with Barrett Browning's poem, *Aurora Leigh*, but considers them as being of the same genre (Künstlerroman), focusing on how "how this genre constructs and is constructed by gender" (213). She overlooks the fact that the difference between prose and poetic forms is significant in *Aurora Leigh*, especially when Aurora discusses "the material conditions of writing," the analysis of which form a crucial part of Houston's argument.

women, I argue that her georgic actually seeks to mask the market implications of poetic labor in order to continue representing poetry as a special, spiritualizing effort.

The georgic is based on a central pun on the word *versus*, a Latin word that denotes both the furrows turned over by a plow and a line of verse. This pun emphasizes that "the *Georgics* are as much about the poet's careful labor of representation within a larger field of cultivating activities" as they are about keeping bees or tending crops (Goodman 556). This observation also suggests that the semantic associations between the modern use of the word "culture" and the pre-industrial conception of "culture" that Williams described are actually central to the georgic. It is natural, then, that Aurora would turn to the georgic to represent the spiritualizing, humanizing, cultivating aspects of her poetic labor. Indeed, *Aurora Leigh* is intensely invested in the affinities between the tending of words and the cultivation of the ground. Aurora Leigh herself adopts the central pun of the georgic in the following passage: "Day and night / I worked my rhythmic thought, and *furrowed up* / Both watch and slumber with long *lines* of life / Which did not suit their season" (III.272-274, emphasis added). Notably, however, Aurora submits the georgic to new uses: instead of describing a farmer with his plow in order to meditate on the labor of poetry-making, it describes the labor of the poet to meditate on the cultivation of the soul; it is the writing of poetry itself that has become the cultivating labor. Aurora has therefore shifted georgic labor from the cultivation of the ground to the cultivation of right thinking and right feeling individuals, the cultivation of civilization, or what I will refer to as neo-georgic labor.

This shift is reflected in the very the structure of the lines quoted above, in which the cultivation of lines of poetry subtly merges with the neo-georgic cultivation of self. The poetess has enjambed the second line so that the reader, in first encountering the notion of furrowing, believes that it will describe the act of poetic creation. However, in

the next line, the reader discovers that it is not the poetry but watch and slumber, or the poet's physical needs, that have been disturbed by the furrowing. The poet continues to describe the failing of her physical body as a result of her labor: "The rose fell / From either cheek" (III.274-275) she says, but secretly rejoices that her work is developing her soul: "I should be better soon perhaps / For those ill looks" (III.282-283), she thinks, explaining that "I" refers to her "conscious and eternal soul" (III.284). As Aurora's energy is channeled into the regeneration of her soul, the physical exertion of writing poetry and its deteriorating effects on her physical body simply prepare her for a resurrection similar to the one experienced by her father and the one she hopes to produce for all of England. Aurora expresses this idea in an intensely horticultural image:

I stood up straight and worked
My veritable work. And as the soul
Which grows within a child, makes the child grow,–
Or as the fiery sap, the touch from God,
Careering through a tree, dilates the bark,
And roughs with scale and knob, before it strikes
The summer foliage out in a green flame–
So life, in deepening with me, deepened all
The course I took, the work I did. (III. 328-335)

As one spiritually invigorated as if by the touch of God, Aurora uses this image not just to describe the regenerating possibilities of poetic labor but to argue that her "veritable" work of truth-telling is completely organic to the organism that she is—that the poetry within her made her a poet and is, when produced in reality, the natural product of that God-given inspiration. She even claims, as she makes her first attempts at writing poetry, that "living" poetry lay within her: "I felt it in me where it burnt, / Like those hot fire-seeds of creation held / In Jove's clenched palm before the worlds were sown" (III.251-253). Aurora's representations of poetic labor therefore not only set poetry apart as a

means for spiritual cultivation but set Aurora apart as the special medium of poetry and poetry's redemptive life force.

The effects of writing prose could not be more different. Aurora is, in fact, careful to separate these two labors, thereby keeping poetry firmly beyond economic valuation. "In England, no one lives by verse that lives" (III.307), she quips. As if to prove this, she details how she does make money, clearly distinguishing prose and poetry as two different forms of labor: "I resolved by prose / To make a space to sphere my living verse" (III.308-309). As she reveals that she "wrote for cyclopedias, magazines, / And weekly papers" (III.310-311), she is careful to suggest the complete superficiality of such labors. For example, she recalls how she "learnt the use / Of the editorial 'we' in a review, / As courtly ladies the fine trick of trains" (III.312-314). This labor is no soul-feeding labor, the reader is forced to conclude; it merely provides "bread / for just so many days" (III.324-325). Like the carpet-dusting that the poet startles the workers from in Book I, writing prose, "though a pretty trade, / Is not the imperative labour after all" (I.879-880). Though there is a danger that engaging in such activities will muddy Aurora's reputation as a poet (III.311-312), her representation of prose as the breadwinner performs an essential labor of keeping poetry from associations with the marketplace.

Intimately connected to the effect of poetry and prose creation on the poet is the difference between the effects of these distinct labors on society. Prose is associated with industrial, not cultural, labor because it is produced to meet a market demand, as Aurora's capitulation to the booksellers and to her readers indicates: "I wrote tales beside, / Carved many an article on cherry-stones / To suit light readers" (III.317-319). However, such literary labor, like marxist labor, only has the purely material end of satisfying and creating the demand for more of itself. The term "light readers" suggests an audience that

is merely entertained by, only superficially moved but not deeply nourished by, its literary consumption. Interestingly, Aurora also rejects drama, the genre Romney is constantly associated with, for similar reasons, asserting that a play "makes lower appeals […] / Adopts the standard of the public taste / […] Wears a dog-chain round / Its regal neck, and learns to carry and fetch / The fashions of the day to please the day" (V.268-272). Drama, like prose, prostitutes itself to satisfy the public's base appetites. No longer does it bring the gods into the people's midst, as it did in the days of the Greeks—"Dies no more / The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus slain" (V.318-3219); rather, it reproduces the conditions in which men in this age have been forced to live, its mere show and "stage-tricks" reflecting a world in which, as Romney says, Christ's grave is empty (II.165). After all, Aurora asks rhetorically, "Can art for praise or hire, / Still keep its splendour, and remain pure art?" (V.258-259). She indirectly answers her own question: "Virtue done for popularity / Defiles like vice" (V.257-258). Far from moving the masses to a cleaner sty, those forms of literature that submit to the demands of marketization perpetuate the sty and are stripped of all power to voice a reforming message.

In contrast, good poetry "Looks just to art"—the poet "does not write for you / Or me" (V.250-252)—and in this way retains its power to raise its reader's sights from their self-absorbed preoccupations and physical appetites. Indeed, the same neo-georgic labor that refined the poet can be performed by the poet on the common man: "plant a poet's word even, deep enough / In any man's breast, looking presently / For offshoots, you have done far more for the man, / Than if you dressed him in a broad-cloth coat / And warmed his Sunday pottage at your fire" (VI.220-224). As the poet's seed is sown, individuals, one by one, will begin to produce the fruit of the poet's cultivating labor. Romney describes this transformative experience: "bodies, leavened by the will and love / [are] lighted to redemption" (IX.939-941). Radically, the effects of Aurora's book on

Romney's soul cause him to eschew a material, physical existence, even the acts of eating and drinking that sustain his physical life (VIII.267-269). Instead, "the book is in my heart, / Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams in me" (VIII.265-266)—it has become completely spiritualized and immaterial, removing men to a plane of existence where, if eating and drinking are unnecessary, matters of economy are certainly irrelevant. Once this individual resurrection is achieved, filling each person with love, all other loves easily follow: "'First, God's love.' / 'And next, […] the love of wedded souls / […] Whose calyx holds the multitude of leaves,— / Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbour-loves, / And civic […] / All reddened, sweetened from one central Heart!'" (IX.881-890). Thus, the harvest of the poet's initial georgic labor is a revolution of feeling and the production of an affective community, one that represents a healing alternative to the isolating, dehumanizing effects of industrial labor, leveling class-walls (IX.932).

The Literary Agent

Despite Aurora's and Romney's final, abstract vision of a New Jerusalem, the community actually created by her poetry has a distinctly material, physical dimension, and necessarily so. Society, as Aurora has already revealed, cannot be revived by poetry alone. Her poetry does not, as Romney suggests, negate the need for physical sustenance or physical substance—real, actualized human relationships; rather, it exists to redeem the pursuit of these from having purely material ends. Through poetic labor, for example, participation in the market can be made to produce actual instantiations of "loves filial." Aurora imagines, in Book V, a father, returning to the bosom of his family after a long journey through the snowy countryside, presenting his daughter with the gift of Aurora's book. "It's yours, the book; I'll write your name in it," he tells her, "That so you may not lose, however lost / In poet's lore and charming reverie, / The thought of how your father

thought of you in riding from the town" (V.469-474). Here, the father's words indirectly dramatize his deliberate selection and purchase of the book in "the town," likely the economic center of the family's apparently rural neighborhood. It is clear that the book itself is prevented from becoming completely commoditized through its association with this impulse of feeling. More importantly, however, the selection and purchase of the book becomes an act of care in its representation of the choice to sustain relationship. It is not just the physical book that has created this ethical power, but the book's content, which ushers the father and daughter into a larger community of readers holding high ethical ideals: "I've been told," he says, implying the presence of this larger community, "[the rhymes] are not idle as so many are, / But set hearts beating pure as well as fast" (V.466-468). Through the georgic labor that gives poetry extra-economic associations, the result of the father's participation in the market can become a sign of love between the father and daughter and even of a broader social solidarity.

As this example shows, it is physical access to the poet's words that facilitates the shared experience of poetry and the creation of an affective community. This is re-emphasized in another scene in which "Affianced lovers, leaning face to face" and "reading haply from some page of ours" suddenly "pause with a thrill […] / When some stanza, level to their mood, / Seems floating their own thought out—'So I feel for thee,'—'And I, for thee: this poet knows / What everlasting love is!'" (V.448-455). In this scene, the physical presence of the book is essential to the lovers' experience of shared ideas and mutual feeling and is therefore a crucial part of their bonding. It is as if the sharing of ideas itself requires a physical proximity facilitated by the book: the lovers must sit close enough to each other to touch, hear each other's breath, and see the words on the page at the same moment. The line between physical and mental intimacy is blurred when the pair "pause with a thrill, *as if* their cheeks touched" (V.451, emphasis

added) when they read the sentiment that accords with their mood. Just as Ned Plymdale tries to woo Rosamond Vincy in Middlemarch by acquiring and carrying to her house the latest "Keepsake" volume—"the very best thing in art and literature as a medium for 'paying addresses'" (III.xxvii.253), Aurora's poetry, though ostensibly less crass than the Keepsake, can nevertheless give gross material forms an association with something more ideal, becoming the basis of a real community of feeling. Her books become "associated with love" (V.474) in part because of readers' shared experience with the book as a physical object, and in Aurora's society, this physical access was possible through the mass publication, distribution, and sale of her volume of poetry.

Interestingly, then, it is through georgic labor that the marxist labor necessitated by industrialization is allowed its own redemptive value. Aurora's industrial labor of prose writing was legitimized and redeemed by her use of it to "make a space to sphere my living verse" (III.309)—a quasi-georgic image of clearing the ground for Aurora's "veritable work" (III.328)—and so it is with the processes of production that make the book a commodity. The entire thrust of the analyzed passages is to imbue even the purchase of the book with affective significance. In order for this cycle to continue, however, Aurora's georgic labor must be maintained as such even as its product undeniably becomes a commercial object.[71] A crucial transition occurs as she prepares to flee to Italy and considers the poem's sale: "I wonder if the manuscript / Of my long poem, if 'twere sold outright, / Would fetch enough to buy me shoes, to go / A-foot" (V.1211-1214). Though she characteristically concludes "It cannot be" (V.1215),

[71] Elizabeth Barrett Browning seems to have experienced a similar dilemma. She once acknowledged to her sister "that 'the success of "Aurora" is a great thing—will be as to money-results'" (Hoeckley 143). However, her contributions to the copyright debate "show that she was aware of her economic interests" but "also suggests her resistance to dwelling on the monetary aspect of her profession" (140). Like her fellow authors, she tended to evoke "issues of literary value and social justice to eclipse parenthetical mention" of the income she lost when her work was plagiarized (140).

presumably because poetry cannot be economically valued, her arrangements for travel include instead giving her manuscript into the care of her friend Vincent Carrington. She proposes to "wait in Paris till good Carrington / Dispose of such, and having chaffered for / My book's price with the publisher, direct / All proceeds to me" (V.1261-1264). This arrangement—the appointment of a literary agent—is actually financially more beneficial for Aurora and suggests that her decision not to sell her poem outright is a sign of her business savvy, reinforcing the idea that Aurora's effort to convince the reader that poets are above money matters is indeed a mighty and still necessary labor. James Hepburn notes that "until the early nineteenth century, most reputable writers sold their work outright" (7), as Aurora first contemplates doing. However, this was a distinctly disadvantageous arrangement for the writer. Until they had established a reputation, authors were forced to give up their manuscripts for pitifully small sums if they desired to see them published. In fact, Milton and later his widow famously made only £18 from *Paradise Lost*, while the publisher amassed a fortune. Hepburn explains, "The publisher took all the monetary risk, and above his costs he kept all the profit for himself, whether it was meagre or huge" (7). Few authors, he suggests, "could make a living from their pen" under such arrangements. "Their bargaining position was weak, and they had to be grateful for small favours" from publishers (7). Poems especially were difficult to market, according to an 1847 article in *Fraser's Magazine* that detailed the earnings writers could expect from the production of the various forms of literature (17). Prose, unsurprisingly, is the most lucrative, with novels and journalistic output enabling "increasing numbers of writers to earn a living wage" (16). Interestingly, then, Aurora's own efforts to represent her remunerative labors as "qualitatively different from the higher art that she considers her true work" (Hoeckley 136) actually reflect the real difficulty any poet would have in earning a living by writing poetry.

The figure of the literary agent was at the center of this tension between representation and reality. The duties of literary agents included "placing material with suitable publishers and periodicals, negotiating terms and contracts and collecting payments and royalties" (Thompson). Though these services were extremely valuable to authors and "it is unlikely that many prominent or prolific authors after Scott's time did not make some use of a personal agent, paid or unpaid" (Hepburn 30-31), they were often regarded with disdain because their existence was thought to "debase literature by emphasizing its commercial aspect" (Thompson). Walter Besant scoffed at this notion: "certain gentlemen who pretend that there does not exist any profession of letters at all […] pretend that it degrades a writer to pay the smallest attention to the material side of his work—nay, they go so far as to say that any attention to the material side degrades literature and turns it into a trade" (979). Writers were frequently taken advantage of by publishers, he argues, because they remained ignorant of the commercial value of their work—the "risk, cost, retail price" (981) and other details essential to publication. For literary agents to protect authors' interests, therefore, they needed to disrupt the "general tendency of the early Victorian literary industry to style itself as distanced from economic concerns in order to guard its ostensible allegiance to aesthetic matters" (Hoeckley 139).

However, it would have been possible for the literary agent to be used to preserve art's spiritually cultivating value despite its market life. Besant eases the fears of his contemporaries regarding the commercial valuation of literature and the work of literary agents by drawing a strong distinction between the artist's work and the subsequent disposal of it. "There is no necessary connection at all between [the artistic value and the commercial value of literature]—not the least. When the poet completes his poem, it is ready to take its place in literature: when it is offered to the public it is a commodity—something to be sold" (980). Therefore, if a literary agent is hired to attend to the

business of producing, marketing, and selling the book, the author can continue to appear disinterested and maintain the culturally necessary position of inspired genius. Moreover, literary agents arose at a time when publishing was shifting "away from 'personal' relations, a […] genteel publishing approach that favored courtesy and cordial links with authors […], towards a more commercial, profit-driven structure coping with a multiplicity of media outlets for printed products" (Finkelstein and McCleery 96), and literary agents were therefore strategically placed to cultivate and ensure the continuation of the relational aspect of book production. Significantly, Besant refers to the author's product as "literary property," inviting a comparison of the literary agent with the estate steward. Even superficially, there are many similarities: like estate stewards negotiating the relations between landlord and tenant, literary agents primarily "saw their role as one of mediating between authors and publishers, serving their authors by negotiating details that both parties—authors and publishers—would regard as fair and reasonable" (Thompson). Beyond the recognition that friendly feeling is good for business, however, the comparisons with the steward suggest that literary agents are responsible for managing property in such a way that it can continue to create and preserve affective community. As Besant hints and within a Williamsian paradigm, this involves preserving a work's literary or cultural value by allowing it to be represented as distinct from commercial value.

This is the role Carrington is chosen to play in *Aurora Leigh*. Carrington clearly fits the mold of the early literary agent. Though literary agency has since become highly professionalized, the early literary agents were commonly friends of the author who acted on his or her behalf, typically without exacting a fee (Hepburn 26). Like Carrington, these friends were often fellow artists; John Forster, who famously acted as a literary

agent for Charles Dickens, is perhaps the most notable nineteenth-century example.[72] Informal agents such as these "bridged the gulf between the patron of the eighteenth century and the literary agent of the twentieth," as Arthur Waugh stated (qtd. in Hepburn 26). Aurora baldly states that she is counting on Carrington to negotiate the sale of her manuscript and to act as mediator in delivering the funds to her, clearly placing him in a position as her agent and seemingly acknowledging that the funds she intends to live on are the proceeds of her poetry. Indeed, she settles herself in Italy as the breadwinner of a family of three but with no further mention of literary activities; as Wallace noticed, labor seems to disappear from the poem after Aurora moves to Italy, though she appears to be living comfortably as a gentlewoman. However, the presence of Carrington has allowed Aurora to remove herself from the scene of her book's commodification. In a letter she receives from him, he notes that she acts as if she is not engaged in business transactions: "You've been silent as a poet should / […] If dumb, a silver piece / Will split a man's tongue,—straight he speaks and says, 'Received that cheque.' But you! . . I send you funds / To Paris, and you make no sign at all" (VII.544-549). Aurora becomes absolutely reticent on money matters after placing hers in Carrington's hands; simultaneously, the book itself begins to proclaim Aurora's genius and its own literary value: "Meantime your book / Is eloquent as if you were not dumb; / And common critics, ordinarily deaf / To such fine meanings […] / praise your book aright. […] / We think, here [in England], you have written a great book" (VII.551-554, 560, 563). Her retreat to Italy and her employment of Carrington, it seems, are strategically designed to prevent herself and her poetry from being associated with financial remuneration and to keep her admittedly

[72] John Forster's work for Dickens was unpaid and included reading and commenting on Dickens's work, negotiating with Dickens's publishers, and even advising him during his divorce proceedings (Hepburn 26-27). Forster, a writer himself, also helped the likes of Tennyson and Carlyle (26).

comfortable and leisurely lifestyle[73] unobserved. Out of the public eye, her image becomes the stuff of imagination, with many believing "that if [she] walked on sand / [She] would not leave a foot-print" (VII.621-622), so ethereal is her make-up. Absolutely divided from association with the material, Aurora and her poetry can, through Carrington's labor of representation, provide an alternative venue for the formation of community that works within and humanizes the market. Community becomes real as the poet herself becomes an ideal.

The New Stewardship

Vincent Carrington's management of Aurora's literary property and especially the representational function of his stewardship strongly resembles Romney's disingenuous assumption of stewardship in his effort to produce social justice. Both Romney and Aurora are guilty of indirection, of aestheticizing institutions and activities to sublimate their actual commitments and intentions. What makes Aurora's use of stewardship an act of care is what it makes possible: by allowing the book to have a material and an aesthetic, spiritualized existence, Carrington allows her neo-georgic labor to offer redemption to a nation by making it simultaneously available—through the market—to each individual reader. This method of creating a unified community through literary property resolves a moral problem that Romney, despite his attempts to create conditions of equality that will end all human suffering, cannot: how to balance the abolishment of evil with honoring men's free will (VIII.762-766) or, as Carol Gilligan would have it,

[73] Aurora settles in a villa in Florence and seems to spend the days wandering in the mountains or about the town visiting old haunts. "So many Tuscan evenings passed the same!" she exclaims. "I could not lose a sunset on the bridge, / And would not miss a vigil in the church, / And like to mingle with the out-door crowd" (VII.1272-1275). In sum, "The days went by" (VII.1039); she does seem to have any pressing tasks to occupy her. The night that Romney arrives she is sitting "alone, upon the terrace of my tower, / A book upon my knees, to counterfeit / The reading that I never read at all" (VIII.2-4). She is doing nothing, and to hide this she tries to appear engaged in a leisure activity.

how to fulfill the need to care while enabling choice; how to express compassion while preserving autonomy. Aurora transforms the rhetorical stance of stewardship, so negative in *The Warden* and in Romney's hands, into a positive value. This new stewardship is not the preservation of an emotionally potent past. Rather, the proper stewardship of literary property makes possible an emotionally viable English future.

Epilogue

"I will be your faithful steward": Lucy Snowe's Care Ethics

Care ethics has been subjected to both internal and external criticism since Carol Gilligan first proposed it as an alternative to more "masculine" theories of moral development in 1982. At the center of this critique has been the recurring anxiety about the personal autonomy of the carer,[74] always conceived of as a woman. In the models of development care ethicists sought to revise, achieving separation and individuation marked the arrival at full maturity. For Erik Erikson, adolescence brings "the celebration of the autonomous, initiating, industrious self" (Gilligan 12). This achievement, however, was only possible for men; a woman "comes to know herself as she is known, through her relationships with others" (12). This model, according to Gilligan, ill prepares men for intimacy and excludes women from realizing selfhood. The early developers of the ethic of care sought to rectify women's exclusion from psychological models of development by suggesting that while men defined morality based on "rights and noninterference" (22), "logic and law" (29) and responsibility as "*not doing* what he wants because he is thinking of others" (38), women defined morality based on their responsibilities to others—"*doing* what others are counting on her to do regardless of what she herself wants" (38). Moral development for women, Gilligan suggests, therefore involves not the achievement of autonomy, but the arrival at an "understanding of the interconnections between other and self" (74) that forms the basis for women's ethical judgments.

Though Gilligan's model legitimated a view of the world and a concept of maturity that acknowledged the self's embeddedness in relationship, it remained unclear

[74] This role is described using the term "one-caring" in Nel Noddings's *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, but I wish to avoid specific association with her concept of care.

"whether, and how, autonomy and care can be made compatible" (Keller 153). Nel Noddings only seemed to widen the gap between autonomy and care in *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), in which she agreed with Gilligan's distinction between rights-based and care-based ethics and established caring as the ethical ideal, superior to all other conceptions of morality. The true ethic of care, she philosophized, has as its purpose "to maintain caring itself" (107). In other words, one committed to an ethic of care should care even when it is uncomfortable or otherwise costly because caring "establishes the human bonds upon which we depend" (112). Thus, "when one intentionally rejects the impulse to care and deliberately turns her back on the ethical, she is evil" (115). Noddings's book, however, raised alarm among other feminists who saw it as undermining many of the tenets of the feminist movement. Sarah Lucia Hoagland particularly objected "to the unidirectional description of caring," which according to her "reinforces oppressive institutions" (109) like patriarchal models of motherhood, from which she claimed Noddings's care model was derived. Her concerns focus on the erasure of self that caring perpetuates within such a paradigm, explaining, "While certainly Nel Noddings insists that we take care of ourselves, the moral basis for this is to become better ones-caring. Thus, we have an other-directed justification for self-concern that can encourage false information about what counts as health as well as what counts as moral good" (110), which to her makes Noddings's caring equivalent to exploitation. In such a case, "Relationship is not ontologically basic, the other is ontologically basic, and the self ceases to exist in its own right. There is, as yet, no real relation" (111). A model of caring without an allowance for true self-care—true autonomy—perpetuates the exclusion of women from the public domain that feminists were trying to combat and denies the ethic of care itself any power or claims to sustain or foster moral development.

These writers echo some of the central concerns confronted by the texts examined in this dissertation. Is it possible to live an ethical life in relationship to others while recognizing the needs of the self and exercising moral autonomy? This is the conflict debated privately in Dorothea Brooke's own mind. Her need to care, to maintain relationship, defines her life and her fate. The conclusion of *Middlemarch* was often read negatively by feminists of Gilligan's and Noddings's generation, perhaps because Eliot herself calls Dorothea's life a sad "sacrifice" (VIII.finale.785). Ellin Ringler paraphrased these views in the question, "Why did [Eliot] relentlessly consign Dorothea to the unmitigated mediocrity of a conventional marriage to Will Ladislaw?" (57). From a perspective of care ethics, however, the conclusion that the novel ends in "sad resignation" (59) cannot be the final word on Dorothea's experiences. For Dorothea, injustice and inequality are not perpetuated by limitations to personal autonomy. Rather, as Cara Weber observes, "Oppression arises from lack of connection with others, from [a] lack of involvement in the lives of others, from [Dorothea's] sense that she cannot reach others" (517). Therefore, an evaluation of Dorothea's choices must consider whether they constituted deliberate actions to liberate herself and others from social isolation and honor an ethic of care. The success of Dorothea's life then becomes a question of whether, in her attempts to care, Dorothea was able to maintain and even enrich her self.

Reading Dorothea as a steward-land owner—as one whose job it is to facilitate social relations while looking after her own interests—opens the possibility of interpreting Dorothea's final narrated actions on these terms to determine their actual resemblance to the wifely or mothering model of care Hoagland decried and that many read as the implication of her marriage to Will. The lens of stewardship allows Aurora Leigh's narrative to be scrutinized in a similar way as Barrett Browning chronicles the

conflict between care and autonomy in both Aurora's and Romney's stories. Evaluating Romney's effectiveness as a steward-land owner reveals the shortcomings in his conception of care. Romney's social scheme destroys itself because his care is so conditional—his guilt-ridden impetus to care is little more than an effort to gain and maintain his own autonomy. He does not seek a life embedded in relationship, nor does he regard such a life as secure. Rather, he seeks to absolve himself, through care, of the obligations that press upon and madden him. As Lady Waldemar jeers, "If you do not starve, or sin, / You're nothing to him" (III.564-565). Romney's vision of an ideal world is one in which emotional needs are eliminated by the fulfillment of material ones.

In contrast, though Aurora's care activities—her poetic labors—are supposed to preserve her capacity for self-realization,[75] she is nevertheless dissatisfied when she begins to intensely feel how her commitment to care isolates her from others, even those she intends to care for. Though her poetry promotes a life of feeling and relationship for others, in other words, the requirement that she remain in the abstract realm of the immaterial is emotionally taxing, especially because her choice to pursue this path keeps her from a real, flesh-and-blood relationship with Romney: "To have our books / Appraised by love, associated with love, / While we sit loveless! is it hard, you think?" (V.473-475). In a way, Aurora's employment of a steward in the form of Vincent Carrington is necessary because her care resembled too much the unidirectional mother-nurturing Noddings describes. It is only after handing responsibility for her self-representation as a poetic genius into another's hands that she can be something else and acknowledge her own personal needs: "I […] wronged my own life," she admits to

[75] "You misconceive the question like a man, / Who sees a woman as the complement / Of his sex merely. You forget too much / That every creature, female as the male, / Stands single in responsible act and thought / As also in birth and death. Whoever says / To a loyal woman, 'Love and work with me,' / Will get fair answers, if the work and love / Being good themselves, are good for her–the best / She was born for. / […] But *me*, your work / Is not the best for" (II.433-442, 449-450).

Romney, "Passioned to exalt / The artist's instinct in me at the cost / Of putting down the woman's— / […] I would not be a woman like the rest, / […] who believes in love, / And owns the right of love because she loves" (IX.641-647, 660-662). Inviting Carrington to manage her affairs constitutes a recognition of her right to receive care, and as he assumes the representation of her literary efforts, Aurora is allowed to distance herself from a self-definition based entirely on her work as an artist-carer and quasi-supernatural arbiter of culture. In Italy, she re-enters the social world unrecognized, able to reconnect with her past and define herself in the present as lover and loved.

Stewardship seems, therefore, to offer a resolution to the conflict between autonomy and care. As Jean Keller suggests is necessary in a model of care in which autonomy is possible and "reconcilable with an understanding of the self as relational, feasible within the sphere of interpersonal relations" (155), stewardship permits women to engage in self-defined action while acknowledging that "the moral agent is an 'encumbered self,' who is always already embedded in relations with flesh-and-blood others and is partly constituted by these relations" (Keller 152). Keller describes her own vision of what such a care model would look like. She explains that autonomy constitutes the ability to "reflect critically on one's reasons for action to determine if they are in accordance with one's actual beliefs, values, desires and be able to act accordingly" (156). Therefore, when this process of reflection and action is put into a relational context, the "care agent" will be able to "provide care and keep her moral integrity intact" (159). Reflection could include Diana Meyers's crucial questions, "What would it be like to have done that?" and "Could I bear to be the sort of person who can do that?" (qtd. in Keller 157), which require a skilled affective imagination to answer. Such reflection also takes as its basis one's own self-respect, guiding the care agent to actions and relationships that do not violate her moral principles. As Keller says, "exercising the

skills associated with autonomy allows a care agent to critically examine the care she provides, thereby ensuring that she engages in appropriate caring" (159). Moreover, such decisions are not made in isolation; the care agent's values are learned in a social context, and she can practice reflection through dialogues with caring friends. Autonomy, Keller suggests, can be "an intersubjective activity" (161). Does stewardship, more than other models, create a space where this kind of moral deliberation becomes possible?

Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) offers some final insights into the nature of stewardship and its relation to care ethics. Both the hero and heroine of Lucy Snowe's narrative—herself and her beau, M. Paul—are made stewards by the end of the novel. However, the implications of stewardship for each are vastly different. M. Paul and Lucy Snowe meet at Madame Beck's *pensionnat*, where M. Paul teaches literature and Lucy Snowe eventually becomes the English instructor. As their relationship passes into friendship and deepens into courtship, the isolated and independent Lucy experiences intimacy with another person for perhaps the first time; it seems to be her first experience of the mutual exchange of love and care in a human relationship. However, M. Paul's relatives and his spiritual advisor, Père Silas, desire to obstruct his potential marriage to a Protestant and scheme to separate the pair. Their plan to do so involves making M. Paul the steward of Madame Walravens's estates on Guadaloupe, an island in the West Indies. This strategy takes full advantage of one of M. Paul's most notable qualities: his capacity for and commitment to care. For example, though Madame Walravens is only the grandmother of his long-dead fiancée, M. Paul has become her benefactor, and, as Père Silas reports, "To our sustenance, and to other charities, I know he devotes three parts of his income, keeping only the fourth to provide himself with bread and the most modest accommodations" (Brontë XXXIV.436). These acts of care are, as this passage suggests,

wholly unidirectional; M. Paul barely engages in self-sustenance, let alone self-care, in his effort to maintain old ties.

Just as M. Paul neglects his physical self, he neglects his moral self as well, allowing himself to be exploited and to participate in others' exploitation. This is the position his acceptance of the office of steward places him in. Lucy observes, "As to Madame Walravens, she wanted her money and her land, and knew Paul, if he liked, could make the best and faithfullest steward: so the three self-seekers [Madame Walravens, Madame Beck, and Père Silas] banded and beset the one unselfish" (XXXIX.510). Rather than rejecting his impulse to care, M. Paul accepts the stewardship, and in doing so agrees to act as Madame Walravens's servant in helping her recoup her fortune, but at a great moral cost. As Helen Cooper points out, M. Paul's duty on his mistress's behalf will be to manage a plantation worked by slaves, making himself complicit in "the brutally obtained fortunes of the Guadeloupe plantocracy" (xlvii). His care, Lucy implies, makes him morally compromised: "His tenderness had rendered him ductile in a priest's hands, his affection, his devotedness, his sincere pious enthusiasm blinded his kind eyes sometimes, made him abandon justice to himself to do the work of craft, and serve the ends of selfishness" (XLII.545). Though M. Paul seems generous, the implications of his actions confirm that stewardship, as a novel like *The Warden* warns, is an optimal position for silencing conscience in the name of care and easily accommodates the creation of mental and moral space of complete irresponsibility, just as Hoagland fears.[76]

Stewardship, therefore, because it so conveniently allows responsibility to be displaced from the carer to the landlord or master figure, is a position that when adopted

[76] She protests, for example, that "An ethics [like Noddings's] which leaves starving people in a distant land outside the realm of moral consideration is inadequate, especially when […] we may well have had a hand in creating these conditions" (Hoagland 113).

seems to justify or even require the suspension of moral judgment. However, as Lucy Snowe's adoption of the role of steward demonstrates, stewardship can create the possibility of a suspension of another kind, one that enables moral judgment as Noddings's mothering-based model does not. Unlike M. Paul, Lucy is wary of care. As her reactions to M. Paul's stewardship show, she recognizes the potential for oppression in relationships and the potential of care to infringe on the free will. She is impatient, for example, of the incessant demands for care made by Ginevra Fanshawe. Early recognizing that these demands could easily absorb all of her time and energy, Lucy establishes limits, curbing both her physical (by insisting, for example, that Ginevra mend her own clothes [IX.94]) and emotional support (by ceasing to offer sympathy when she judges that Ginevra has exaggerated her sufferings [XL.527]). Lucy's complete lack of respect for Ginevra, whom she describes as "fighting the battle of life by proxy" (XL.527), stems from her own conviction of the value of self-respect and independence, which for her is obtained through work. Like Keller, Lucy recognizes that "self-respect is necessary […] to be morally autonomous" (XIV.160) and to experience development, something the infantile Ginevra Fanshawe, ever dependent, never does.

Lucy is therefore averse to relationship as an encroachment on her independence, even when love and affection are promised. "I might have had companions, and I chose solitude" (XIV.139), she reports as she describes how she rejected the friendly overtures of each teacher at the *pensionnat*. However, her independence and isolation can, at times, become physically and emotionally overwhelming. Several times throughout the novel, she expresses relief during moments of suspension and liminality in which no action or decision-making is required of her. This relief in suspended action first occurs as she crosses the English Channel to France. Upon entering the boat, she sighs, "my homeless, anchorless, unsupported mind had again leisure for a brief repose; till the 'Vivid' arrived

in harbour, no further action would be required of me, but then . . . . . Oh! I could not look forward. Harassed, exhausted, I lay in a half-trance" (VI.57). Without relationship then, without someone who "car[es] enough about the would-be autonomous agent to teach her the requisite autonomy skills" (Keller 158) and support her ability to imagine future choices and their outcomes through dialogue, Lucy's ability to engage in decision-making and the development of an autonomous self is so exhausting as to be gratefully relinquished.

The dilemma Lucy faces is therefore how to enter into relationship and sustain it through care, making mutual growth and development possible, while preventing this relationship from becoming a threat to her autonomous self. The opportunity for both relationship and personal growth comes when she and M. Paul finally directly express love and commitment to each other near the novel's close. Anxious to find a way to care for Lucy in his absence, M. Paul has secretly purchased for her a small house and school in Villette. In doing so, he gives her the opportunity to become absolutely self-sufficient. Should she accept the house as a gift, she would theoretically be freed of obligation to M. Paul, who has declined to be her landlord (XLI.537); because she must pay the rent out of her own savings and work to make the school profitable, the *externat* could make her completely independent. However, Lucy accepts the diminutive domicile and school neither as the recipient of a gift nor as proprietress. Rather, she chooses to become a steward: "I promised to work hard and willingly. 'I will be your faithful steward,' I said; 'I trust at your coming the account will be ready'" (XLI.537). This is a choice to become a carer, but the decision does not smother her free will. Rather, the relational context stewardship gives to her effort to gain self-respect through honest work improves her ability to effect self-care, as is evidenced in her description of M. Emanuel's three-year absence as "the three happiest years of my life" (XLII.543). This contentment is derived

from a new ability to imagine her future without emotional or even physical fatigue: "At parting, I had been left a legacy; such a thought for the present, such a hope for the future, such a motive for a persevering, a laborious, an enterprising, a patient and a brave course—I could not flag" (XLII.544). Indeed, Lucy is creative and innovative in her enterprise, expanding her clientele and using a windfall to add a *pensionnat* to her *externat*. Unlike M. Paul's stewardship, Lucy's stewardship creates a space of liberation through obligation, room to care for self and others. By acting as a steward instead of foreclosing feeling through ownership, Lucy keeps open the possibility of relationship, of a future of love.

The miniature social world produced in Lucy Snowe's *pensionnat* in the Faubourg Clotilde may represent a feminist care ethicist's haven, but such a world is always yet to be realized in the text. In its very miniaturization, there is something idealized about Brontë's description of Lucy's position that suggests its unrealizability and perhaps even a certain cynicism toward the balance Lucy strikes. What becomes important is, instead, the imaginative effort of conceiving such a world or such a life—both the author's effort and the reader's. The work of imagination is, as Jean Keller asserts, at the heart of a true care ethics, which puts literature and the novel at the center of the ethic of care. As Victorian authors imagined, represented, and made available a society in which care could persist alongside a new individualism, stewardship became the *ars poetica* of the nineteenth-century novel.

Future directions for this project include engaging more thoroughly with contemporary theory on the ethic of care, especially Joan Tronto's explorations of "the intersections of care ethics, feminist theory, and political science" (Sander-Staudt). The ambivalence of stewardship as a positive value and its implications in reproducing the "slave morality" care ethics has sometimes been associated with will be emphasized by

focusing on those literary figures that seem best to reveal the instrumentalization of care ethics in the service of hegemonic power structures and social control. The updated ethic of care paradigm will allow for a closer and expanded examination of the ways that the works of novels and novelists mirrors the ambivalence of the function of the steward itself as it participates in affective community creation through aesthetic and political interventions.

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